



The conservation imbalance

● India's wildlife is often identified mainly with charismatic large mammals such as **tigers, elephants and rhinos**

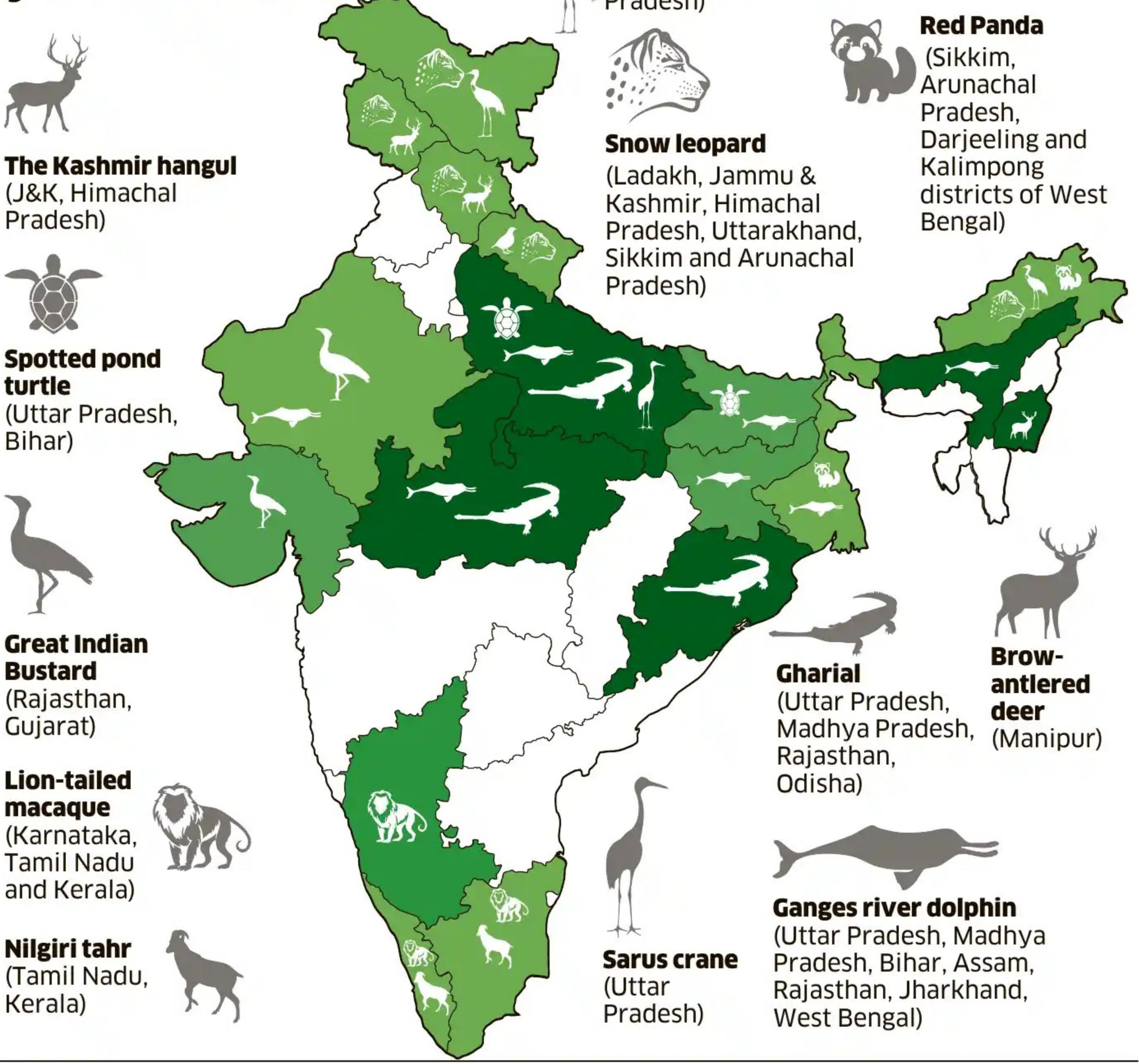
● Between 1947 and 2020, big cats, especially the Royal Bengal tiger, received the most attention from researchers and policymakers

● Conservation efforts remain largely animal-focused, leaving many endemic and threatened plant species neglected

India ranks **172nd** in the Global Nature Conservation Index 2025, placing among the world's 10 lowest-ranked countries



Endangered, yet overlooked



Funding favours famous species*

Project Tiger
Rs 2,530 cr
Project Elephant
Rs 236 cr

Development of Wildlife Habitats (Includes Project Dolphin, lion, cheetah and others)
Rs 1,118 cr

* Outlay for the 15th Finance Commission cycle (2021-26)

The 'charismatic' divide

Flagship species

- Large size
- Mostly mammals
- Attracts funds for conservation
- Found mostly in protected areas



Non-flagship species

- Smaller in size
- Negative reputation hinders conservation
- Found mostly near human habitats



Barriers to conservation of lesser-known species

- Habitat degradation and fragmentation
- Poor research
- Climate change impacts
- Poaching and illegal wildlife trading
- Urbanisation
- Inadequate funding and policy attention

Those distributed throughout India



Source: PIB, Wildlife SOS, BioDB, EVS Institute, 'Reorienting flagship species funding to support sustainable conservation efforts in developing countries', 'Chasms in charismatic species research: Seventy years of carnivore science and its implications for conservation and policy in India', DTE, Media reports

Ecosystem approach is key

Wildlife, from Page 1

T R Shankar Raman, a scientist at Mysuru-based Nature Conservation Foundation who has extensively studied the Western Ghats, says a vast number of species live outside protected areas.

“Even in the Western Ghats, despite several protected areas, many species are thriving in coffee and tea plantations, agricultural fields and private lands. Several critically endangered species such as the Nilgiri marten, Nilgiri tahr and slender lorises are poorly studied and inadequately protected.”

He expresses concern over the alarming rate of green cover loss in the Western Ghats. “Several native plants that support and sustain dependent fauna are being removed for the expansion of plantations and development projects. Not much effort is being made to create awareness among farmers about the importance of native trees and the habitats they support. One reason is the lack of financial incentives for farmers to conserve these habitats,” he says.

Misguided conservation

For grassland species, indiscriminate afforestation is a major concern. In the Jayamangali Blackbuck Conservation Reserve in Tumakuru, eucalyptus plantations introduced as part of afforestation efforts have reduced suitable habitat, forcing blackbucks to move out as they tend to avoid wooded areas.

The woody plantation also led to the displacement of wolves and the entry of leopards, altering the local ecology. In the absence of wolves, the blackbuck population increased, resulting in human-wildlife conflict in surrounding agricultural areas.

This reflects a broader issue in the country, where tree-planting drives are often poorly planned, with little attention to species selection, site suitability and evaluation of such

projects.

A few years ago, a team of researchers led by M D Madhusudan and Abi Tamim Vanak mapped 3.2 lakh sq km of biologically important open natural ecosystems, including grasslands, scrublands, ravines, dunes and woodland savannas. These habitats are characterised by sparse or no tree cover.

These habitats support distinct flora and fauna uniquely adapted to local environmental conditions. Characteristic mammals include the caracal, Bengal fox, Indian grey wolf, blackbuck and chinkara, among others.

Similarly, the GIB, floricans, demoiselle crane, Eurasian crane, various raptors, as well as smaller birds, reptiles and arthropods inhabit these ecosystems. This diversity is supported by a mix of grasses, shrubs and bushes.

“Despite their biodiversity value, these habitats are often overlooked and receive limited conservation attention. They have even been classified as ‘wastelands’ in several government records,” says conservation biologist Sanjay Gubbi.

“Such habitats have, unfortunately, been a prime target for tree planting activities by both government and civil society. But planting trees in areas where they do not occur naturally can have severe impacts on endemic ecosystems and the indigenous wildlife they support,” he says.

There are instances of species loss driven by the misconception that open natural ecosystems are wastelands that need to be greened. Protected areas established to conserve specific species have, in some cases, lost those very species due to afforestation activities. Ranebennur Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka lost the great Indian bustard due to one such misguided conservation initiative.

Aparna V Watve, Red List Authority Coordinator for the IUCN Species Survival Commission Western Ghats

Plant Specialist Group (WGPSG), says Indian ecological conservation suffers from “plant blindness” as people do not tend to give flora the importance it deserves.

“Our life depends on plants, yet we know little about them. While our ancestors understood the importance of plants, modern society is paying little attention to them,” she says.

She fears that inadequate focus on plant conservation may already have resulted in the extinction or endangerment of several ecologically important species. She also warns that while many ecologically important plants are already losing ground, some medicinally important species are being overexploited and harvested unsustainably, threatening their survival.

Over the last five years, the IUCN WGPSG has identified nearly 200 plant species in the Western Ghats that fall under threatened categories.

Infrastructure development is another major concern. Honnavalli N Kumara, principal scientist at the Coimbatore-based Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, says linear infrastructure projects pose a threat to endangered species even within protected areas.

The lion-tailed macaque, an endangered monkey endemic to the rainforests of the Western Ghats, has seen its protected habitat expand by nearly 900 sq km in the Sharavathi Valley of Karnataka over the past decade. However, expanding road networks, electrification, urbanisation and most significantly, mega hydropower projects are fragmenting its habitat.

“During our study in 2008-23, we recorded several incidents of road-kills and electrocution of macaques inside protected areas,” Kumara says.

He notes that tourists and resort owners in Agumbe have turned these primates into ‘beggars’ by feeding them food items that are not part of

their natural diet.

India is home to 22 critically endangered species, including the snow leopard, red panda, Nilgiri tahr, Himalayan brown bear, caracal, dugong, Ganges river dolphin, lesser florican, Jerdon’s courser, marine turtles, gharial and whales. While the government runs programmes for habitat restoration, predator control, monitoring and species recovery, many species remain neglected.

Riverine species

River species such as the Ganges river dolphin, gharial and river turtles face threats from water pollution, upstream dams and interstate coordination challenges. The Chambal river, which flows through Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, is home to nearly 80% of the critically endangered gharial population, which is under severe pressure from sand mining. However, enforcement against the sand mafia varies across states.

“We have seen a sharp decline in eight soft- and hard-shelled river turtle species, with about a 90% drop reported in four of them. Illegal fishing is another major threat to gharials, as their snouts often get entangled in nets and are sometimes cut off,” says Nachiket Kelkar of the Wildlife Conservation Trust.

Observing that conservation cannot be driven solely as a central government programme, Shankar Raman points to the Tamil Nadu Forest Department’s initiative of selecting one endemic species each year for population surveys and habitat studies.

“Last year, Tamil Nadu along with NGOs and researchers conducted a range-wide study of the Nilgiri tahr and documented its population distribution and the threats it faces. With this data, officials, along with NGOs and educational institutions, can make scientific efforts to conserve the species,” he says, adding every state should follow this model.

Nameless extinction

Beyond these, large numbers of frogs, snakes, amphibians, butterflies and birds remain absent from conservation policies.

Scientists continue to discover new frog species in the Western Ghats, the North East and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. “Several new species are often threatened even before they are formally named and described. Many may already be extinct before they are discovered. It is an unfortunate phenomenon we call nameless extinction,” says a frog researcher at Delhi University. A lack of political will and poor understanding of ecological issues are key factors driving the decline of these species.

“Our afforestation and plantation programmes have been limited to increasing green cover or carbon sinks. Instead, we need ecological restoration by planting diverse native species. Forest officials, instead of mono-culturing forest patches with economically important trees, which ultimately fail biodiversity goals, should ecologically restore the landscapes,” notes Watve.

Conservation outside protected areas requires a different approach. Eco-sensitive zones were created as buffers for core areas and to maintain landscape connectivity. However, maintaining these corridors has become a major challenge due to private ownership of land within them.

“There is some logic to using flagship species for conservation campaigns, as charismatic species make it easier to engage the public in conservation efforts. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the ultimate goal of conservation is functional ecosystems that sustain natural habitats and viable populations of all species across landscapes. This is what Indian policies do not recognise,” Chellam says.

A more ecosystem-focused approach may be essential to ensuring long-term conservation outcomes across India’s diverse landscapes.

4.26 Crore Beneficiaries Receive Food Security | The Dream of a ‘Hunger-Free Karnataka’ Realised

Anna Bhagya - A Modern Form of the Dasoha Tradition

Guarantee Varthe

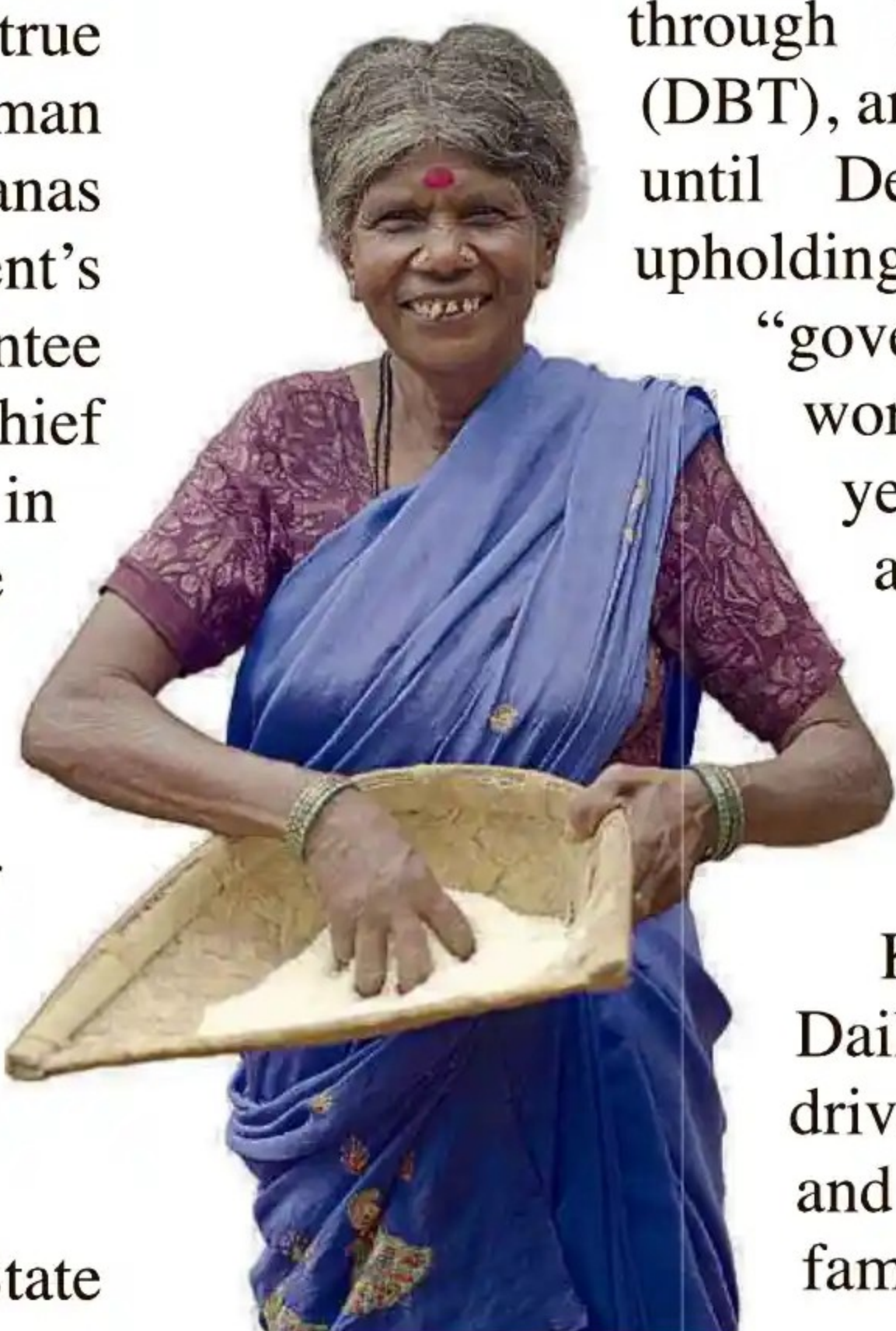
Bengaluru: “Aashe ichchegenna gaasi maadadirayya, dasohiyaagirpa daasanagirisenna Koodala sangamadeva, dharmam” - these immortal lines from Jagajyothi Basavanna’s vachana highlight the true essence of compassion and dasoha that every human being must embody. This noble vision of the Sharanas has found expression in the Karnataka Government’s Annabhagya scheme. Among the five Guarantee schemes announced by the government led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah after assuming office in 2023, Annabhagya has emerged as one of the most significant and successful schemes, reaching the grassroots and benefiting the most vulnerable sections of society.

The scheme was launched with the objective of providing a total of 10 kg of food grains per month to every member of Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya cardholder families in the state. When the Central Government failed to supply the required quantity of rice, the State

Government did not remain passive. Instead, in place of the additional 5 kg of rice promised, it directly transferred cash benefits to beneficiaries’ bank

accounts at the rate of ₹34 per kg through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), amounting to ₹11,821 crore until December 2024, thereby upholding its promise of being a “government that delivers on its word.” Over the last three years, Annabhagya has addressed hunger among 4.26 crore families and fulfilled Chief Minister Siddaramaiah’s vision of a “Hunger-Free Karnataka.”

Daily wage workers, auto drivers, agricultural labourers, and economically weaker families have been saving



thousands of rupees every month on food expenses due to the Annabhagya scheme. For nearly a year, poor families used the cash directly credited to their bank accounts to purchase pulses, oil, vegetables, and other nutritious food items, as well as pay school fees for their children. The scheme has brought about a transformative change in reducing malnutrition and strengthening the rural economy.

Crores of Beneficiaries: According to government data, more than 4.26 crore beneficiaries across the state continue to benefit from the Annabhagya scheme. Up to 2023-24, thousands of crores of rupees

‘Indira Kit’ to be Implemented Soon

The Cabinet has already approved the distribution of the Indira Food Kit (Integrated Nutrition and Dietary Initiative for Revitalizing Annabhagya Beneficiaries) in place of the additional 5 kg of rice under the Annabhagya scheme. Based on family size, beneficiaries will receive tur dal, sunflower oil, sugar, and salt instead of the additional rice.

have been transferred directly into the accounts of poor families through DBT, ensuring transparency. The Public Distribution System (PDS) has been further strengthened, and technology has been successfully leveraged to ensure benefits reach eligible beneficiaries.

A Model for the Nation: No other state in the country has implemented free food grains and direct cash transfer support on such a large scale. Karnataka’s model of hunger-free and nutritional security is today being widely appreciated by other states and social experts across the country.

US, Iran officials report progress in talks to end war

Trump says two sides getting 'a lot closer'; Iran fine-tuning MoU

NEW DELHI/DUBAI, REUTERS

Iran, the US and mediator Pakistan all said on Saturday that progress had been made in talks on ending almost three months of war.

Iran said it was finalising a memorandum of understanding after its top officials met Pakistan army chief Asim Munir. The Pakistani army said the negotiations had resulted in "encouraging" progress towards a final understanding. "An MoU is being fine-tuned," said a Pakistani security official.

US President Donald Trump said he would discuss the latest Iran draft agreement with advisers and might make a decision on Sunday on whether to resume attacks on Iran, *Axios* reported.

In a phone interview with *CBS*, he said the two sides were "getting a lot closer" to a deal, but also warned that if they do not reach an agreement "we're going to have a situation where no country will ever be hit as hard as they're about to be hit".

Later in the day, two Pakistani sources said a revised Iranian proposal has been submitted to the US.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is visiting India,



Iran President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) and Pak army chief Asim Munir (R). AFP

The trend this week has been towards a reduction in disputes, but there are still issues that need to be discussed through mediators. We will have to wait and see where the situation ends in the next three or four days.

ESMAIL BAGHAEI
Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson

said some progress had been made. "Even as I speak to you now, there's some work being done. There is a chance that, whether it's later today, tomorrow, in a couple days, we may have something to say," he said.

Sources have told *Reuters* the proposed framework would unfold in three stages: formally ending the war, resolving the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz and launching a 30-day window for negotiations on a broader agreement.

An Arab official said Trump would hold a phone call on Saturday with leaders from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Egypt, Turkey and Pakistan.

► **Iran, Page 8**

Trump's fresh invite to Modi a year after Munir row

ANIRBAN BHAMIK
NEW DELHI, DHNS

With the US prodding India to buy more energy from it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has received another invitation for a visit to White House, almost a year after he turned down one from President Donald Trump, who was then also hosting Pakistan army chief Asim Munir.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Modi in New Delhi on Saturday and discussed the situation in West Asia as he conveyed the US president's invitation to the PM.

Rubio emphasised the US would not let Iran hold the energy market hostage and affirmed US energy products had the potential to diversify India's energy supply, according to a read-out from Washington.

► **Rubio, Page 8**



Narendra Modi



Marco Rubio

Fuel prices rise in Bengaluru Diesel, petrol prices hiked third time in 8 days

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Petrol, diesel and compressed natural gas (CNG) prices went up on Saturday, the third increase in just eight days, even as oil marketing companies continue to claim losses due to elevated energy prices in global markets amid the West Asia conflict.

In Delhi, diesel became costlier by 91 paise to touch Rs 92.49 per litre, while the price of petrol went up by 87 paise to reach Rs 99.51 per litre. CNG prices went up by Re 1 per kg. One kg of CNG now costs Rs 81.09.

In Bengaluru, petrol price has increased to Rs 108.09 per litre from Rs 107.14 per litre record-

ed on Friday. Diesel price has increased from Rs 95.04 per litre to Rs 95.99 per litre.

Of the three price hikes in eight days, the first came on May 15 with Rs 3 per litre increase in diesel and petrol prices and Rs 2 per kg increase in CNG rates. The second increase came on May 19 with 90 paise per litre hike in petrol and diesel prices.

The cumulative increase in the prices of petrol and diesel since May 15 stands at around Rs 5 per litre. In the case of CNG, the cumulative price hike is Rs 4 per kg, including the earlier hikes of Rs 2 per kg on May 15 and Re 1 per kg on May 17.

► **Fuel price, Page 8**
Fare hike inevitable: KSRTC chairman, Page 6

Govt notifies new minimum wages

BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka has notified new minimum wages for organised and unorganised sectors per which an unskilled person should be paid Rs 23,376 per month in the Greater Bengaluru Area.

The minimum wage for a highly skilled worker in the state capital has been fixed at Rs 31,114 per month, according to the labour department notification issued late Friday night.

Outside Bengaluru, the minimum wage for unskilled work ranges from Rs 19,300



to Rs 21,251.

The revised minimum wages will apply to 81 scheduled employments, benefitting around two crore workers in the organised and unorganised sectors.

Minimum wages are revised once every five years, with the existing figure in Karnataka being roughly Rs

15,000 for unskilled workers. The Karnataka Employers' Association (KEA) described the minimum wage revision as "steep".

Labour Minister Santosh Lad said the government has hiked minimum wages by 60%.

"We have fulfilled a long-pending demand of the state's labourers. The revision will provide economic security to workers," Lad said.

Karnataka has relied on the landmark Supreme Court judgment in the Reptakos Brett case.

► **Wages, Page 8**

Girl student hurt in attack by strays

BENGALURU, DHNS: A woman student was allegedly attacked by a pack of stray dogs in Hoysala Nagar, near Ramamurthy Nagar, on Friday evening.

The attack took place when the student was walking home.

CCTV footage, that went viral, showed that the student was walking when a pack of more than 10 stray dogs, which were blocking the path, began barking aggressively. As she tried to avoid them, the packs suddenly charged at her.



One of the dogs reportedly bit her two or three times, leaving her injured. The terrified student screamed for help and managed to step back, narrowly escaping more serious injuries.

Passersby rushed to her rescue, driving the pack away. The victim was rushed to the KR Puram Government Hospital, where she received primary treatment and vaccinations. Locals raised concern over the rise in the number of stray dogs in the area and sought stepping up of animal birth control.

MORE TEETH

On SC order, Centre empowers DCs to penalise polluters

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Its garbage, especially the plastic menace, threatening air and water resources in your area? Escalate your complaint directly to the deputy commissioner, who has now been empowered to act against polluters.

Till now, gram panchayats and urban local bodies were handling the implementation of the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, which came into force in 2016.

Following a direction by the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has delegated vast powers to deputy commissioners/district collectors (DCs) across the country for the next one year.

Besides blackspots and dump yards, focus will be on tourism hotspots and pilgrim centres where the Supreme Court has asked for a "special mechanism" to implement the rules.

KARNATAKA'S WASTE

Total garbage generated: **13,273** tonnes per day

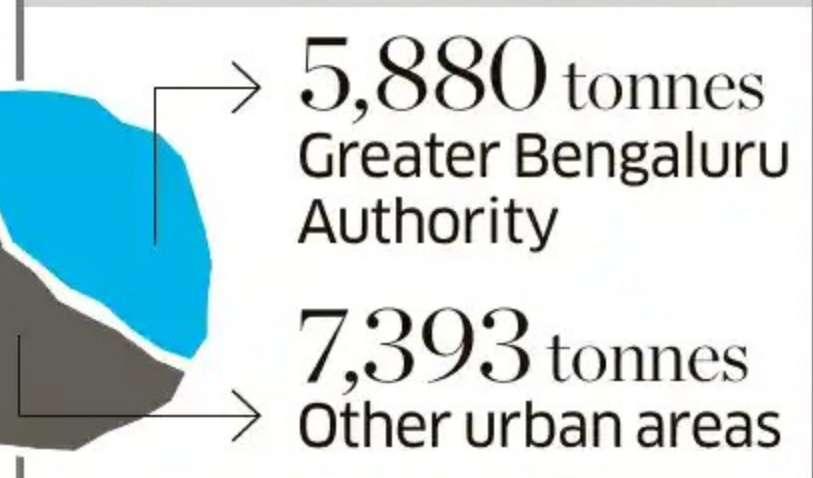
→ **5,880** tonnes Greater Bengaluru Authority

→ **7,393** tonnes Other urban areas

Garbage processed **10,826**

Gap in processing **2,446**

*In tonnes per day



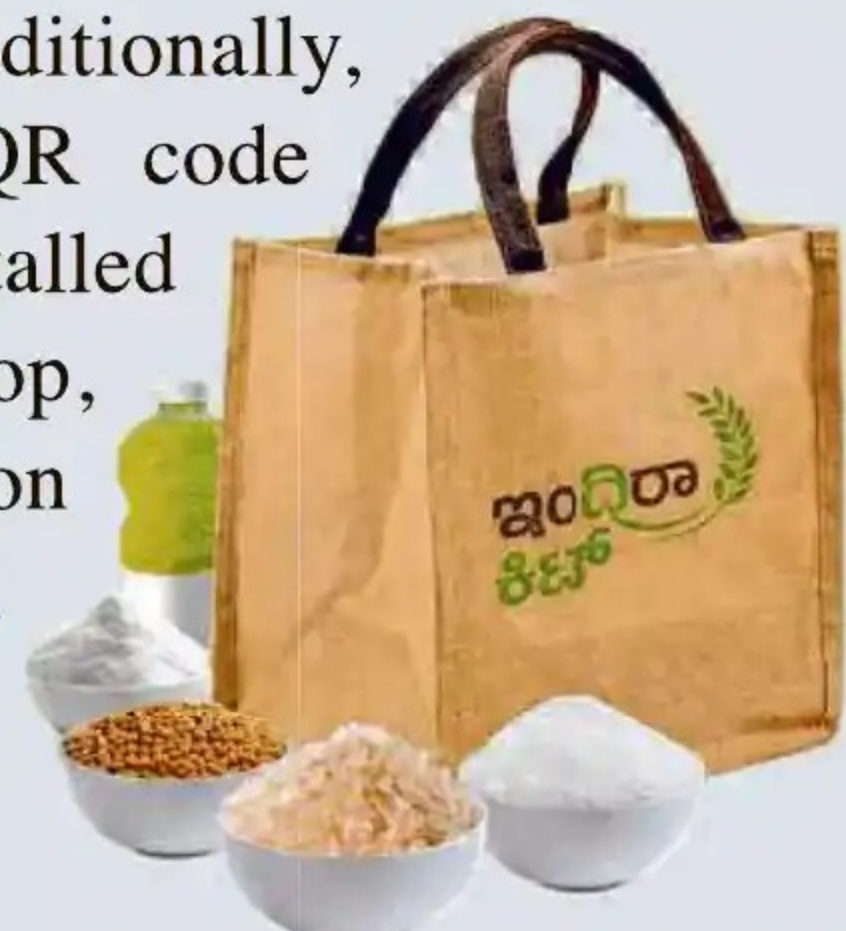
Bulk waste generators which fail to follow the rules will face strict action.

The powers under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act include power to direct closure, prohibition or regulation of any industry, operation or process; stoppage or regulation electricity or water supply or any other service to entities violating the rules.

The May 18 notification refers to the Supreme Court order that had given a detailed direction to the Centre and the states.

► **Garbage, Page 8**

The Chief Minister has already instructed that the food kit include a maximum quantity of nutritious dal. Additionally, software enabling QR code scanning will be installed at every fair price shop, based on which ration card holders will receive the Indira Food Kit.



Siddaramaiah Becomes 'Annaramayya'!

Within hours of taking oath as CM in 2013, Siddaramaiah announced the Annabhagya scheme. Initially offering rice at just ₹1 and later making it completely free, he earned recognition for addressing hunger among the poor. Since then, people of Karnataka affectionately began calling him "Annaramayya." The Annabhagya scheme was reinitiated in a stronger form after 2023 as one of the Five Guarantees. What began as a politically determined welfare initiative has become a source of hope for people in the state.

Statistics

4.26 Crore Total Beneficiaries
More than ₹18,897 Crore utilised so far on Annabhagya



My son met with an accident and has been bedridden at home. I am the only earning member supporting the family. Earlier, when there was no food, we used to walk barefoot and survive on fruits from the forest. Now, we receive rice through Annabhagya. Thanks to our Siddaramaiah, we are able to live peacefully

Jademadamma, Chamaranagar



After my husband's death, I struggled to continue our traditional pottery business due to lack of capital. During that difficult time, the Annabhagya scheme became a major support for my family. The free rice and groceries provided by the government completely removed the anxiety of arranging three meals a day for my family.

Mahadevi, Indi



My dream was to live independently without depending on anyone. The Annabhagya scheme gave me strong support. Without worrying about food, and with savings from all the guarantees, I was able to buy a cow and start dairy farming. Today, I live with dignity through the income I earn from selling milk every day.

Neelamma, Belthangady



A Fight Against Poverty

I know what hunger caused by poverty feels like. That is why, on my very first day as Chief Minister, I signed the Annabhagya scheme. My aspiration was that no poor person in the state should sleep hungry. That sacred initiative which began then, has today reached crores of homes as a 'Guarantee', and that gives me immense satisfaction.

Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister



A Hunger-Free Society is the Foundation of a New Karnataka

Responding to people's hardships is our foremost duty. Building a hunger-free society is the foundation of a New Karnataka. Through Annabhagya and the five Guarantee schemes, our government is committed to making Karnataka the most progressive and welfare-oriented state in the country.

D.K. Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister



Food Security Reaches the Last Citizen

Our department has successfully fulfilled the responsibility of transparently delivering the visionary Annabhagya scheme of the Chief Minister to eligible beneficiaries. The Food Department remains committed to ensuring food security reaches even the last poor citizen of the state.

- K.H. Muniyappa, Minister for Food and Civil Supplies

DAILY BOTTLENECK

Enforcement push triggers debate over practical implementation

June reopening rush: Back to school and back to traffic?

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

With schools across the city gearing up to reopen this June, Bengaluru is bracing for the return of morning and afternoon congestion. While the traffic police are pushing a fresh 10-point directive, ranging from banning parking around school zones to enforcing on-campus boarding, school managements and transport operators argue that blanket mandates ignore ground realities, particularly in the choked Central Business District (CBD) area.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Karthik Reddy pointed out that boarding and deboarding on the road right in front of schools goes against road safety rules. “As much as possible, they must handle the boarding and deboarding of children inside the school. Also, the entry and exit gates should be separate,” he told *DH*.

He added that school buses are being parked on roads and insisted that schools must either park them inside their premises or find alternative off-road locations.

Implementing this in the CBD area, which has prominent schools, has proved difficult. Many schools cannot afford to maintain their own fleets and have outsourced transport to agencies using smaller buses, as hiring BMTC or KSRTC buses costs an unviable Rs 12,000 per day.

To control congestion, a prominent school on Vittal Mallya Road has resorted to a restrictive mechanism under which parents reportedly have to pay around Rs 4,000 per month to allow private cars inside the school gates.

While BTP states that almost 98% of schools currently start before 8 am, with only about 2% to 3% starting by 9 am, the debate over further staggering timings is facing resistance.



Traffic jams extended up to Richmond Road flyover as school vans, autos and private vehicles blocked movement on Residency Road near several private schools and colleges. *DH* PHOTO

‘Mass pooling a failure’
D Shashikumar, General Secretary of the Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools, strongly opposed pushing school hours earlier, stating that an early start will take a toll on parental health and well-being. “Early start timings are not the solution. Mass pooling is a failure, and while allowing vehi-

cles inside school premises, safety matters much more,” he said.

Shashikumar suggested that the focus should shift to designating specific zones for mass pick-up and drop-off points, where the government provides a school bus fleet to carry students through school routes. He urged the regularisation of private carriers such as minivans

and smaller vehicles by subsidising operators and providing minibuses to enhance trust in this transport mode.

A representative from a CBD-based school management said, “While we want to assist the traffic police, forcing us to bring hundreds of private vehicles onto our campuses creates a safety nightmare inside the gates, and we will have to take the blame for any mishaps. Many historic schools in the CBD simply do not have the space to build internal transit loops.”

Many parents say they are already balancing corporate shift timings, and pushing school hours earlier forces young children to wake up at unreasonable hours.

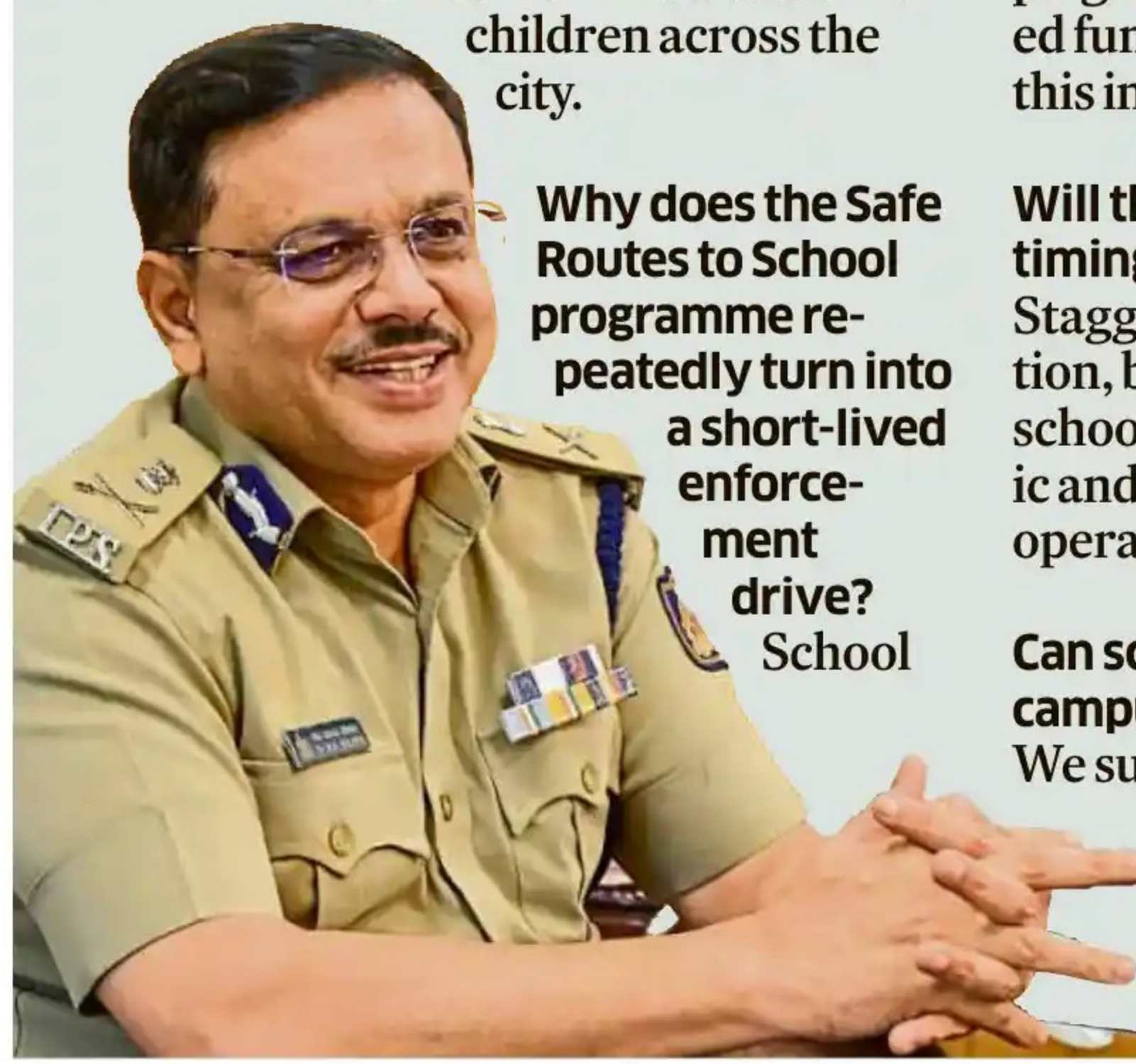
Prof B R Supreeth, academician, noted: “Traffic police presence during school hours is essential. Temporary barricades, no-parking enforcement, and trained school safety volunteers can create safer entry and exit points for students. Public responsibility matters too. Drivers must slow down,

avoid parking near gates, and always yield to children. A city becomes truly civilised when its roads respect its youngest citizens. The government, traffic police, schools, and citizens must act together. The journey to school should never be dangerous. The road is a child’s first classroom, and Bengaluru must ensure it teaches safety, not fear.”

The enforcement drive also heavily impacts the private autorickshaws and vans that ferry children daily. For these operators, balancing strict traffic rules with the physical safety of children is a daily struggle. “The police tell us not to park or stand near the gates, but where else do we go? Parents trust us to drop their children safely right at the gate. If we park two streets away, who will take responsibility for the child walking through the city’s broken footpaths and heavy traffic? The schools don’t let our autos inside. We are caught between the police fine and the child’s safety,” said an autorickshaw driver.

Top cop on building safer routes for children

As Bengaluru prepares for schools to reopen amid worsening traffic congestion, Karnataka DG & IGP MA Saleem speaks to *DH* about why road engineering, enforcement, education, and coordinated planning must work together to make school commutes safer for children across the city.



DG & IGP M A Saleem

Why does the Safe Routes to School programme repeatedly turn into a short-lived enforcement drive?
School

safety is a shared responsibility. Safe Routes to School succeeds only when engineering, education, enforcement and community partnerships work together. Sustainable impact needs long-term design changes, behaviour change campaigns, formal agreements and dedicated funding lines. We will institutionalise this initiative.

Will the government mandate staggered timings?
Staggered timings reduce peak congestion, but blanket mandates can disrupt schools and parents. We will be pragmatic and consultative to balance safety with operational realities.

Can schools be forced to use internal campus space?
We support on-campus drop-offs where feasible, but a blanket legal force is impractical for constrained campuses. We will audit schools, provide technical assistance

and small grants for modifiable sites, and require approved offsite alternatives where necessary. Enforcement will be tied to compliance after support is given.

How will you deal with private autorickshaws and vans?

We aim to make school transport safer by requiring union registration with the RTO and making drop-off plans a regulatory requirement. Structural fixes, shared infrastructure and enforcement paired with incentives will be the approach.

Who is responsible when different agencies own parts of the solution?

We are pushing for single-window accountability for school zones. Enforcement is our job; engineering and education require municipal and education department action. We coordinate with all authorities and run awareness drives, but long-term change needs inter-departmental policy.



Experts say deteriorating stormwater drains are contributing to flooding, heat retention and public health risks across the city. *DH* FILE PHOTO

Citizens map B'luru's stormwater drain crisis

Datajam examines drains, health and flooding risks

BENGALURU, DHNS

A coalition of urban researchers, hydrologists and citizen volunteers produced a granular public assessment of the city’s stormwater drain (SWD) network, finding systemic links between deteriorating drainage infrastructure and a cascade of urban problems, from localised flooding and rising heat to contaminated drinking water and public health risks in informal settlements.

The findings emerged from a day-long datajam held at BLR Design Centre on Church Street, organised by OpenCity, an initiative of Bengaluru-based Oorvani Foundation, in collaboration with Mod Foundation, WELL Labs, Biome Trust and Sponge Collaborative, supported by the Bengaluru Sustainability Forum’s Small Grants Programme.

The datajam was part of a wider initiative called Building a Resilient Bengaluru, which has combined online masterclasses with a series of guided citizen audits across the city.

The participants worked with audit data collected on the ground and cross-referenced it with official SWD maps, lake maps, topographical data and land-use patterns.

One team examined the relationship between stormwater drains and urban heat, finding that open drains function as heat sinks while closed drains tend to

become hotspots. Concretised surroundings intensified heat retention, whereas green buffers around drains helped moderate temperatures.

Another team focused on Shivajinagar constituency, analysing how built-up density around drains affects water permeability and quality, and whether BBMP work orders were meaningfully addressing the problems identified.

A third group looked at how natural drainage systems, lakes and tanks, historically absorbed flooding, and how land-use change and the loss and encroachment of water bodies have altered drainage patterns and worsened current flood points. A striking finding was that many of the city’s worst flooding locations today correspond to sites where lakes once stood.

One more team mapped the intersection of stormwater drains with sewage and water supply lines, identifying points where proximity creates a tangible risk of drinking water contamination for nearby residents.

A separate group examined how flooding and sewage interact in informal settlements and noted the relative absence of health facilities in the most vulnerable zones.

On land use and water quality, participants analysed whether proximity to industrial clusters was degrading drain quality, and whether residential areas were also contributing to inflows that compromise the network.

Participants noted that encroachment on drain margins, combined with large-scale concretisation, was steadily reducing the city’s capacity to manage rainfall events.

Cyber fraudsters steal Rs 7.69 lakh via WhatsApp link

BENGALURU, DHNS: An 86-year-old retired wealth manager lost Rs 7.69 lakh to cyber fraudsters after clicking on a malicious WhatsApp link sent under the guise of a credit card statement.

The victim, a resident of Richmond Town, alleged in his complaint that he had contacted the customer care of a private bank on May 21, seeking a copy of his credit card statement.

A few minutes later, he received a callback from an unidentified person who claimed to be a bank representative and informed him that the statement link had been sent to his WhatsApp. The caller then asked him to open it.

Soon after he clicked on the link, Rs 7.69 lakh was fraud-

ulently withdrawn from his savings bank account.

Speaking to *DH*, the victim said he tried to report the fraud by calling the national cybercrime helpline 1930, but remained in the queue for nearly 45 minutes.

Unable to complete the process on his own, he eventually sought help from his daughter to register the complaint online. He then approached Ashok Nagar police and filed a case.

In his complaint, the victim also expressed frustration over the cybercrime helpline system, alleging that it was “not public-friendly” and required several documents to be uploaded before a complaint could be registered.



28-year-old man dies after slitting his throat

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 28-year-old man allegedly died after slitting his throat at a vacant site in Ashok Nagar in the early hours of Friday, triggering initial suspicion of murder before police confirmed it to be a suicide case.

The deceased has been identified as Gautam, a resident of Wilson Garden. He was working as nursing staff at a private hospital but had stopped going to work a few months ago as he was reportedly suffering from depression. He had reportedly been discharged from a rehabilitation centre a day before the incident.

Police said the incident came to light early Friday morning when passersby no-

ticed Gautam lying in a pool of blood at the vacant site and alerted Ashok Nagar police.

Since the body was found with the throat slit, investigators initially suspected foul play and began probing the case from a murder angle. Police examined the scene of crime, collected preliminary evidence and verified his recent movements before concluding that he had taken his own life, police added.

Police also recorded statements from Gautam’s family members, who told investigators that he had exhibited suicidal tendencies earlier and had attempted to end his life in a similar manner on a couple of occasions, but was rescued by family members each time.

Two killed in separate late-night road accidents

BENGALURU, DHNS

Two young men, including a 21-year-old BSc student, were killed in separate road accidents in the city on Friday night. Police have detained both drivers involved in the incidents and registered cases of reckless driving causing death.

Goods auto kills student

In the first incident, 21-year-old Sushank, a BSc student at a private college, died on the spot after his motorcycle collided with a speeding goods auto-rickshaw near Kalaguruma at Mallathahalli junction.

Sushank, a native of Shivamogga, was residing in rented accommodation in Ullal. Around Friday midnight, he

was riding his motorcycle from Mallathahalli towards Ambedkar College.

“A speeding goods auto-rickshaw, coming from the opposite direction, from Ambedkar College towards Mallathahalli, rammed into his two-wheeler. Sushank sustained severe head injuries and died on the spot,” a senior traffic police official said.

Jnanabharathi traffic police have arrested the goods auto driver, Harish, and seized the vehicle.

BMTC bus rams into electric scooter

In another accident, a 23-year-old private firm employee was mowed down by a Bangalore Metropoli-

tan Transport Corporation (BMTC) bus near Tavarekere Junction.

The deceased, Sai Durga Rao, was a native of Andhra Pradesh and was working in the city.

According to police, the incident occurred late Friday night when Rao was riding his electric scooter from Tavarekere Junction towards Checkpost junction. A BMTC bus heading towards Sarjapur crashed into his scooter from behind. The impact of the collision threw Rao off the vehicle, causing fatal injuries. He died on the spot.

Madiwala traffic police have taken the BMTC bus driver into custody. Further investigations into both cases are underway.

Constable's wife dies by suicide

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 26-year-old woman, the wife of a police constable, allegedly died by suicide at the police quarters in KR Puram on Friday night.

The deceased has been identified as Lakshmi Priya, who was married to Rajesh Aradhya, a police constable attached to HAL police station. The couple had married three years ago and had a child.

A senior police officer said that Lakshmi Priya had reportedly been quarrelling with her husband after suspecting him of having an extramarital affair following the birth of their child. No suicide note was recovered. Rajesh reportedly denied allegations of dowry harassment and told investigators that the couple had frequent disputes over trivial family issues, which might have led her to take the extreme step.

LITERARY INVESTIGATION

Two-day festival examines crime through history, gender, power

VIBHA S BHAT
BENGALURU, DHNS

Dead Write, a two-day crime literature festival, kicked off on Saturday at the Bangalore International Centre (BIC), Domlur. The festival framed crime not as spectacle, but as a structure embedded in the city’s everyday life, archives, and stories about people, power and justice.

As visitors entered the festival, they were greeted by several interactive installations, including a mugshot-mimic booth, a chalk-line crime-scene setup, “make your dead” postcards, and a “sketch the killer” activity. The morning sessions explored the intersections of crime, journalism, science

and policing.

The afternoon session, “In Cold Blood”, opened, paradoxically, with policemen Neeraj Kumar and Maxwell Pereira, alongside former underworld participant-turned-writer and filmmaker Agni Sreedhar. The discussion explored how crime survives within the ordinary: police stations dealing more with morally messy realities than heroic narratives, and the ways power and systems shape who becomes a victim and who becomes a criminal.

In “Daggers and Darogas”, panellists Madhulika Liddle and Shampa Roy discussed how crime fiction can re-examine history through the lens of caste, gender and nationalism. Liddle noted



Speakers Neeraj Kumar, Agni Sreedhar, Maxwell Pereira, and Deepthi Talwar at the Dead Write crime edition of the Bangalore Literature Festival at BIC in Bengaluru on Saturday. *DH* PHOTO/ B K JANARDHAN

that historical crime fiction is “more about regular, everyday people”, unlike dry history textbooks, while Roy spoke about how older crime narratives often demonised women. Through murder investigations set in Mughal

Delhi and colonial Bengal, the speakers explored how fiction can uncover silenced histories.

Reflecting on the Swadeshi period, Roy described it as “a Hindu upper-caste assertion, one

that often alienated certain castes, communities and women,” despite its language of rebellion and nationalism. She also described archives not merely as research sites, but as haunted spaces filled with erased women, forgotten detectives and voices buried under patriarchal narratives. The session ultimately argued that historical crime fiction can resurrect emotional truths left behind by textbooks, while also creating alternative narratives for women.

Jerry Pinto opened his session by saying, “We all like murder mysteries because they force us to confront the elephant in the room—death—that we all die.” He transformed the discussion from one about detective

fiction into a meditation on loneliness, morality and human tenderness. Calling loneliness a “national epidemic” and arguing that “we live with incorporated justice,” Pinto questioned society’s fragile faith in justice. With sharp wit and effortless humour, Pinto kept the audience in laughter throughout the session, turning conversations on crime and violence into something both engaging and reflective. “Murder in Mahim” explores prejudice, sexuality, class inequality and the quiet desperation of urban life.

The later sessions featured international author Leodora Darlington and Amit Lodha, Additional Director General of the State Crime Records Bureau, Bihar.



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Tejasvi Surya seeks public consultations on flyovers

BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya has written to Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Ltd (B-SMILE), seeking public consultations and the immediate disclosure of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for a series of proposed elevated corridor projects across the city.

In a letter addressed to B-SMILE Director (Technical) B S Prahallad on Saturday, Surya said several of the flyovers for which tenders have recently been floated fall partly or entirely within the Bengaluru South Lok Sabha constituency. He urged the agency to place the DPRs in the public domain and conduct consultations with elected representatives, residents, commuters and experts before proceeding further.

Among the projects for which B-SMILE has recently called tenders is the proposed elevated corridor from Minerva Circle to Hudson Circle, along with a loop flyover linking the Balagangadharanatha Swamiji Flyover to Town Hall. Surya also referred to a 5.2-km elevated corridor connecting Old Madras Road to Electronics City via Swami Vivekananda Metro Station, Indiranagar, Old Airport Road and Hosur Road up to Silk Board Junction, and a 5.3-km elevated corridor from Shoolay Circle to St John's Hospital Road through Anepalya and Adu-

godijunctions. Other proposed corridors include stretches on Pipeline Road, Tumakuru Road, Konanakunte Cross and Kanakapura Road.

Surya said that under the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA) Act, the authority is empowered to review and grant prior approval for urban mobility and infrastructure projects in the city. He claimed the proposed flyovers had not received such approval and questioned whether they had undergone independent scrutiny.

IIIS professor and urban mobility expert Ashish Verma agreed. "The permanent and sustainable solution for all of the city's traffic-related problems is to move towards shared, electric and active mobility. This will contribute to making the city more livable. Flyovers or any such road infrastructure interventions are not the solution. These interventions don't eliminate congestion, but only shift it to other parts of the city. We've witnessed this," he explained.

Speaking to *DH*, a B-SMILE official said that public consultations were not the norm when it comes to large-scale infrastructure projects. "It is experts who decide infrastructure projects. Here, infrastructure projects are being politicised. When the said MP's government was in power, they too pushed for flyovers across the city," he said.



Tejasvi Surya

Pod taxis, ropeways under study for Bengaluru roads

Alternative mobility systems could help decongest crowded corridors

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

In an attempt to improve Bengaluru's traffic woes, Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Limited (B-SMILE) has started exploring options for various kinds of pod taxis, from ropeways to inverted rails.

With Mumbai recently laying the foundation for AI-driven pod taxis, some other Indian cities, including Bengaluru, are exploring similar options.

The concept of pod taxis had previously been floated by the

erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) in 2018 to provide last-mile connectivity while reducing carbon emissions. However, the idea never materialised. This time, B-SMILE is exploring three options: hanging inverted rails, personal rapid transit systems and ropeways.

"There are some examples of these transport systems either already existing or progressing in Indian cities, such as the Varanasi Rope-way or the inverted rails in Ahmedabad. We're currently studying each of the systems to see which is the most feasible in Bengaluru and where it can be applied. The study is still at a nascent stage," B S Prahallad, Director (Technical), B-SMILE, told *DH*.

The aim is to use the transport system to improve first and last-mile connectivity in the city, while reducing the vehicle load on the road. "In



The city's worsening commute crisis has revived interest in futuristic transit solutions. DH PHOTO

order to reduce traffic congestion in the city, we have to either remove vehicles from the road or create extra space. We're working on various projects to provide this extra space by utilising tunnels and elevated corridors. Pod taxis are another way of creating extra space without burdening the roads. It's an evolving idea; we need to see where it leads. We're looking into whether it can be built under the PPP

model or if an entity needs to be brought in," he elaborated, adding that the idea is to utilise it in city pockets that currently have a large population but limited facilities.

According to R K Misra, urban mobility expert and independent director at B-SMILE, the pod taxi system can be used where metro connectivity is limited. "For example, on Old Airport Road from MG Road to Marathahalli to Var-

Over 2,700 people attend second open house to avail khata-related services

BENGALURU, DHNS: Close to 2,700 citizens visited open house centres across the city on Saturday to avail various khata-related services.

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) is conducting open house meetings every Saturday across the five city corporations to make it easy for citizens to get e-khata, apply for B to A khata conversion, and apply for corrections or mutation.

Last week, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar launched the 'My e-khata My Right' campaign, terming it the state government's sixth guarantee, Bhumi (Land) Guarantee.

On Saturday, 809 e-khata

applications were received and 304 applications for conversion of B to A khata were received. A total of 1,972 applications were received across various categories on Saturday, and 1,164 applications were processed. However, this included many applications that were submitted last week as well.

Residents who had applied for khata services last week revisited the centres this week as well. While a few of their applications were processed, a few of them were asked to come back next week. These were mostly applications that needed additional scrutiny owing to the lack of a few documents, officials said.

Flood-mitigation work gains pace at Sai Layout

BENGALURU, DHNS

To prevent flooding at Sai Layout, Bengaluru East City Corporation (BECC) Commissioner D S Ramesh, on Saturday, directed officials to complete the remaining 12-metre box-pushing work of Geddalahalalli Railway Vent by May-end.

Ramesh, who conducted a site inspection to review the progress of the railway vent work and stormwater drain maintenance works being carried out at Geddalahalalli Sai Layout, said that once the work is completed, the retaining wall construction can be taken up, enabling smooth flow of rainwater through the railway vent.

"This will provide a permanent solution to the flooding problems faced in the sur-



Bengaluru East City Corporation Commissioner D S Ramesh inspects stormwater drains and other infrastructure around Sai Layout.

rounding areas," he said.

The Commissioner also inspected the progress of desilting and cleaning works being carried out under the Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for stormwater drains near Geddalahalalli

DyCM reviews proposal

Earlier this week, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar met a team from Futran Solutions, a transportation equipment manufacturer, to explore the possibility of deploying pod taxis in the city in order to strengthen connectivity and improve public transport efficiency.



thur, there is no metro planned and the roads are narrow. The possibility of road widening is limited, so in such a scenario, we can consider elevated pod taxis. This will also improve access to the metro," he said.

Pregnant woman alleges secret recording in hospital restroom

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 36-year-old pregnant woman has filed a complaint with Varthur police, alleging that a male staff member at a private hospital secretly filmed women inside a restroom using his mobile phone.

According to the FIR, the complainant, a resident of Chikkabelandur, stated that she visited the hospital in Mullur on Sarjapur Road on Thursday afternoon. While she was inside the restroom, she noticed a male staff member behaving suspiciously. He was allegedly filming inside using his mobile phone. When she confronted him, he escaped.

She immediately informed the hospital administration staff, who kept the employee away from her and showed his phone only after around 15 minutes.

Upon checking the phone, obscene photographs and videos of a few women, along with locked folders, were found on the device. She panicked, fearing that he might have recorded her too. The incident caused her severe mental stress, fear and humiliation, following which she decided to file a case, police said.

Based on the complaint, police have seized the suspect's mobile phone and are waiting for the FSL report to take action against him.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Save Sankey Tank Campaign: Voice of Sadashivanagar; Main Gate, Sankey Tank, Bhashyam Circle, Sadashivanagar; 7.30 am. **'Kanakodyami' Meet:** Gathering of Halumatha entrepreneurs and awareness session on business opportunities; Presence of Yogeshwarananda Swamiji and Ishwaranandapur Swamiji; Inauguration by HM Revanna; Presence of Bandeppa Kashempur; Presided over by Saneel Jayaraj; Lecture on 'Government Incentives for Skill Development and Establishing Industries' by Gyanappa U Hudayda; Halumatha Entrepreneurs Association; Kanakadasa Samudaya Bhavana, Sir M Visvesvaraya Layout, Jnanaganga Nagar; 10 am.

CULTURAL

Seminar on Kannada Cinema: Inauguration of 'Chandanavana Andu, Indu, Mundu' by Ramesh Aravind; Guest: KV Prabhakar; Presided over by Jayamala; Seminar sessions by P Sheshadri, KV Chandrashekar, and AH Sagar; Presided over by HR Bhargava; Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce; Karnataka Film Artists Association, Chamarajpet; 9.30 am.

Centenary Celebration of Ghatam Vidwan KN Krishnamurthy: Music concert featuring vocal by Sheetal N, violin by Chandrala S Katte, mridangam by K Vishnuvardhan, and ghatam by Skanda Manjunath; Centenary Award presentation to TR Rajamani; Presence of LS Shyamasundara Sharma and Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma; Vidwan Sri KN Krishnamurthy Guruswamiji Trust; Seva Sadana, Malleshwaram; 9.30 am onwards.

Avalahajje Short Film Festival-2026: Guests: Neethu Shetty, Greeshma Sridhar, Sangeetha Nanjundaswamy, Sanjotha Bhandari, Malavika Gubbivani, and Shantala Damle; Gubbivani Trust; Kannada Sahitya Parishat, Chamarajpet; 10 am onwards.

Sangeetha Sourabha-2026: Light music programme 'Preethi Chilume Bhavagana Sudhe' and 'Kala Sourabha' Award presentation; Inauguration by HN Aarathi; Guests: SA Chinne Gowda and Sridhar Sambhram; Presided over by Manu Baligar; Awards to be presented by Kesari Haravoo and Chandrika Bollaje; Sourabha Foundation; CA Shwath Kalabhavana, NR Colony, Basavanagudi; 10 am.

Bharatanatyam Rangapravesha: Performance by Poorvi S Kashyap; Presence of P Pravin Kumar, Deepa Sridhar, and S Nanjunda Rao; Meenakshi Rangamancha Hall, Doddakallasandra; 6 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thunder-showers

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	29.2°C
Minimum	22.5°C

Rainfall (as of 8:30 am) --
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm) 85%
Sunset (May 24) 6:40 pm
Sunrise (May 25) 6:53 am
Moonrise 12:14 pm
Moonset 00:15 am
(Relevant data recorded at 5:30 pm) Source: IMD

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Publication of Tender Notice B-SG-P-SBC-CCTV_YARD Dated:11-05-2026
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tenders for the following works:

Item of Work	Approx. Value
1. South Western Railway-Bengaluru-Division: Provision of CCTV coverage in yard area, mainline points and crossings at vulnerable station (ie Banaswadi, Mularu, Patchur, Somanayakkanpatti, Sivadi, Toppur, Karuvalli, Omalur, Krishnarajapuram, Whitefield, Baiyyappanahalli, Ramanagaram, Nayandahalli, Hejjala, Yeliyur, Chikbanavar, Sampige Road, & Shantigram) at Bengaluru Division.	Rs. 18,99,21,777/-
2. South Western Railway- Bengaluru Division: Provision of CCTV camera at 17 locations of RPF office (Bengaluru, Yasvantpur, Tumakuru, Mandya, Dharmapuri, Bengaluru Cant, Yelahanka, Hindupur, Sri Sathya Sai Prasanti Nilayam, Channasandra, Baiyyappanahalli, Krishnarajapuram, Krishnarajapuram/DSL, Whitefield, Devangonthi, Bangarapet & CIB/Bengaluru).	
3. South Western Railway- Mysuru Division: Provision of CCTV surveillance systems at yard main line crossing areas of Hassan, Arsikere, Kadur, Birur, Chikjajur, Davangere, Amaravathi Colony, Harihar, Ranibennur, Haveri, Bhadravati, Shivamogga Town & Byadrahalli railway stations.	
4. South Western Railway- Hubballi Division: Provision of CCTV coverage of mainline points and crossings in yard area at vulnerable stations of 9 stations in phase-1 Hubballi, Dharwad, Belagavi, Londa, Gadag, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Hosapete and Ballari stations of Hubballi Division.	
Last date for submission of bids:Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 08-06-2026	
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in	
Deputy Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer Projects / Bengaluru	
PUB/125/AAFI/PRB/SWR/2026-27	
Download the RailOne app for easy ticket booking, PNR status, and more railway services.	

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
Sr. Divisional Engineer / Co-ordination / Southern Railway / Palakkad invites E- TENDERS for the following works:
E -TENDER NOTICE No. PGT/07/11/2026 dated: 22/05/2026

Sl No.	Name of work	Approximate Cash value in (₹) lakhs	Bid Security Amount (₹)	Tender closing date on 15:00 hrs	completion Period in months
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Palakkad Division: Construction of new TRD depot at Palakkad (PGT)	99.33	1,98,700/-	15/06/2026	Ten
2	Removal of vegetation, bushes in midsection along side track in between the tracks, side drain, catch water drain cleaning in Senior Section Engineer / Permanent Way / Calicut section for a period of 2 years.	241.00	4,82,000/-	23/06/2026	Twenty Four
3	Removal of vegetation, bushes in midsection along side track in between the tracks, side drain, catch water drain cleaning in Senior Section Engineer / Permanent Way / Quilandy section for a period of 2 years.	186.32	3,72,600/-	23/06/2026	Twenty Four
4	Removal of vegetation, bushes in midsection along side track in between the tracks, side drain, catch water drain cleaning in Senior Section Engineer / Permanent Way / Kannur section for a period of 2 years.	156.20	3,12,400/-	23/06/2026	Twenty Four
5	Removal of vegetation, bushes in midsection along side track in between the tracks, side drain, catch water drain cleaning in Senior Section Engineer / Permanent Way / Kasaragod section for a period of 2 years.	140.48	2,81,000/-	23/06/2026	Twenty Four
6	Removal of vegetation, bushes in midsection along side track in between the tracks, side drain, catch water drain cleaning in Senior Section Engineer / Permanent Way / Mangalore section for a period of 2 years.	194.70	3,89,400/-	23/06/2026	Twenty Four
7	Assistant Divisional Engineer / Kannur Jurisdiction: Proposed Standardization of LCs & overhauling of LCs for a period of 2 years (location attached separately as annexure)	392.48	7,85,000/-	23/06/2026	Twenty Four
8	Assistant Divisional Engineer / Mangalore Jurisdiction: Proposed Standardization of LCs & overhauling of LCs for a period of 2 years (location attached separately as annexure)	312.15	6,24,300/-	23/06/2026	Twenty Four
9	Palakkad division-Augmentation of existing Track Machine rest houses at Shoranur, Payyanur, Kasaragod & Mangaluru central.	309.78	6,19,600/-	23/06/2026	Twelve

- All the contracts on Works / goods / services will be subject to the new GST Act as applicable from time to time.
- Contractors / Suppliers have to register themselves with GST authorities and to furnish the GST registration number in order to process the bills from 01.7.2017 onwards.
- For complete details of the above tenders please visit Web site "http://www.ireps.gov.in".

Note: It is the responsibility of the Tenderer to check any corrigendum issued for any correction or modifications uploaded subsequently in website; the same shall be taken in to account while submitting Tender.

Sr. Divisional Engineer / Co-ord / Southern Railway / Palakkad
(For and on behalf of the President of India)

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THE INDIAN NAVY INVITES APPLICATION FOR SHORT SERVICE COMMISSION IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (EXECUTIVE BRANCH) – JAN 27 COURSE
Applications are invited from unmarried eligible men & women candidates for grant of Short Service Commission (SSC) in Information Technology (Executive Branch) of Indian Navy under Short Naval Orientation Course commencing Jan 2027 onwards at Indian Naval Academy (INA) Ezhimala, Kerala. Candidates must fulfil conditions of nationality as laid down by the Government of India.

QUALIFICATION	VACANCY	GENDER	AGE
A candidate must have minimum 60% marks in English in class X or XI and one of the undermentioned educational qualification with minimum 60% overall qualifying marks, in either or a combination of the following: - (a) MSc / BE / B Tech / M Tech (Computer Science / Computer Science & Engineering / Computer Engineering / Information Technology / Software Systems / Cyber Security / System Administration & Networking / Computer Systems & Networking / Artificial Intelligence / Data Analytics) , OR (b) MCA with BCA / BSc (Computer Science / Information Technology).	15	Men & Women	Born Between 02 Jan 2002 to 01 Jul 2007 (both dates inclusive)

For more details visit - www.joinindiannavy.gov.in and Employment News dated 16 May 2026

APPLY ONLINE FROM 16 MAY to 01 JUN 2026

Safeguarding Seas for a Viksit Samridha Bharat

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. PROJECT-SWR-TL-THN-30MVA Dated : 20-05-2026
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tenders for the following works.

Name of the Work	Approx. Value
Design, Supply, Construction, Testing and Commissioning of the following works for arranging power supply to an extent of 30MVA (inclusive of connected 5MVA) on EHT basis in favour of Divisional Railway Manager, Traction & Distribution, South Western Railway, Mysuru Division for railway traction s/s at Tholahunse railway station RTSS : (i) 1 no. of additional line Terminal Bay's at 220/66kV SRS Davangere Sub-station (ii) 66 kV 630Sqm Single Circuit UG Cable from 220/66kV SRS Davangere S/S to Tholahunse RTSS for a route length of 7.840 km	Rs. 45,33,49,959.29
Last date for submission of bids: Upto 15:00 Hrs on 12-06-2026	
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in Keep visiting the website for any corrigendum till closing date	
Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer Project / Bengaluru	
PUB/125/IAS/PRB/SWR/2026-27	
Download the RailOne app for easy ticket booking, PNR status, and more railway services.	

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice
TENDER NOTICE No. N-235-62
Tele Tender 05-2026
Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer/Tele/HQ, N. E. Railway, Gorakhpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender for the following works from the contractors having sufficient experience as per eligibility criteria mentioned in tender document.
1. Tender No.: N-235-62 TeleTender 05-2026, Name of work: Augmentation and improvement/Upgradation of Telecom infrastructure by Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning of IP based Intercom Exchanges & Telecom Equipments along with LAN cabling including associated works related to Fire Alarm System, Lightening Arrestor, Power Supply and Replacement of old analog PCSTE Conference system with Digital Audio Conference System in Head Quarter Gorakhpur, N.E. Railway. 3. Tender Value ₹ 2,11,86,266.95/- (Rs. Two Crore Eleven Lakh Eighty-Six Thousand Two Hundred Sixty-Six Rupee & Ninety Five Paise only) 4. Bid Security: ₹ 423700.00 /- 5. Validity of offer 60 days. 6. Date & Time of closing and opening of Tender Dated 25.06.2026, Time 12:30 hrs. 7. Completion Period 06 (Six) Months. 8. For any changes of tender, please check on internet website for Corrigendum of the original tender notice. 9. Detailed tender notice, documents, Eligibility criteria, terms & conditions are available at website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. Note: The Tenderer's/bidder's must upload all relevant attachments/ Format/Annexure along with their bid. Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer/ CPRO/Signal-41 Tele/HQ, Gorakhpur
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SRI B Y VIJAYENDRA
BJP State President

INTERVIEW

K'taka will take lead on coalition of states against test: Med Edu minister

I now regret my support for NEET, says Dr Sharan Prakash Patil

The under graduate National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical courses was held on May 3, only to be cancelled because of a paper leak.

Over 1.2 lakh students were impacted in Karnataka, a state that has among the highest number of medical seats. The fiasco has revived Karnataka's demand for NEET to be scrapped. **Rashmi Belur** sits with Medical Education Minister **Dr Sharan Prakash Patil** for a conversation on the test which is in the eye of a storm.

Are you against NEET or the way it is being conducted?
No, we're not against NEET. We're against the way it is being conducted. There's one or the other issue every year. I was the one who petitioned the union government, during my first term as medical education minister, for a common entrance test to reduce pressure on students who appeared for multiple entrance tests. I now regret my support.

Before NEET, Karnataka saw medical seat-blocking scams. What's the guarantee that it

won't happen again, if NEET is scrapped?
We've overcome all such faults in the system. There's no question of seat blocking. All seats will be filled by Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) through counselling. No seat will go back to college managements. Even management quota seats will be filled through KEA. Now, what corrections has the union government done?

Wasn't NEET implemented based on a Supreme Court order and the resultant law passed by Parliament?
Yes. But the union government can still amend the National Medical Commission Bill and give the responsibility of conducting entrance tests for medical courses to the respective states, by scrapping NEET.

Why can't states move the Supreme Court?
We've already passed a resolution (against NEET) in the Legislative Assembly and Council, which was sent to the union government. We're examining other options, too. We'll discuss with like-minded lawmakers in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and

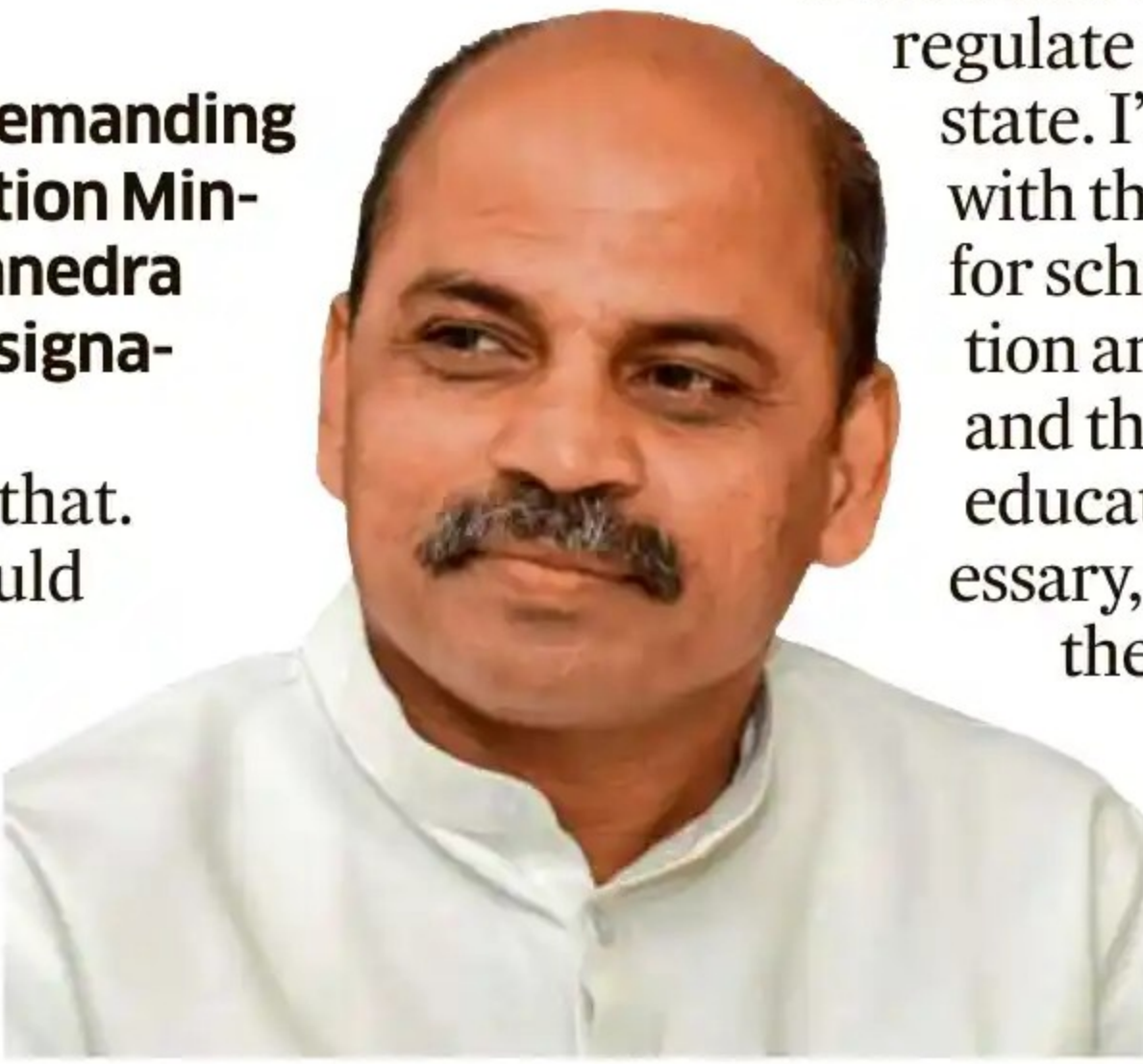
Telangana, which are also facing the brunt of NEET. Karnataka will take the lead in gathering opinions of southern states and discuss the next course of action. We can place a request before the Supreme Court. But when various people made appeals, the apex court did not entertain them.

Do you think the CBI inquiry will provide justice to students?
We have no trust in the CBI investigation, which has been ordered to cover up the issue. If the union government was really concerned about the future of lakhs of aspiring doctors, it would have ordered a Supreme Court-monitored CBI probe.

You're also demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation.
I still stick to that. Pradhan should resign or PM Modi should sack him. I demand that the PM

address the nation and spell out corrective measures that will be taken. This issue concerns the future of 23 lakh youngsters. At least four students died by suicide after the May 3 NEET got cancelled. No action has been initiated against anybody in the union government although such instances are recurring every year. We strongly suspect the role of some big people in BJP and that there's huge money involved.

What about suspicion that coaching centres are behind the paper leak?
These coaching institutions not only charge high fees, but they're also misleading students. There's a need to regulate them in the state. I'll discuss this with the minister for school education and literacy and that of higher education. If necessary, we'll amend the Karnataka Education Act to tackle coaching centres.



Dr Sharan Prakash Patil

JD(S) keen on contesting at least 100 seats in GBA polls

BENGALURU, DHNS



HDK asked not to compromise with the BJP during seat-sharing talks

The BJP-JD(S) alliance faces a litmus test as the date for the elections to the five municipal corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) draws ever closer. Workers and functionaries of both the parties are likely to caution the leadership of their respective parties against compromising on the number of seats each will contest in the local polls.

The JD(S) is reportedly keen on contesting at least 100 of the total 369 wards spread across the five corporations. The JD(S) is even contemplating contesting the elections by itself should seat-sharing discussions between the allies take an unexpected turn.

JD(S) leaders have reportedly learnt that the Karnataka BJP, based on a survey it carried out, is willing to cede only 60 seats to its alliance partner – an opinion that the saffron party has reportedly conveyed to its central leadership. These reports are said to have impelled Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy to convene a meeting of JD(S) leaders to finalise the party's stance ahead of seat-sharing talks with the BJP.

Kumaraswamy is learnt to have fumed at the Karnataka BJP during his recent meeting. "Kumaraswamy has made it clear that, if the JD(S) is offered only 60 seats, we must be prepared for a friendly fight with the BJP," said a JD(S) source.

The source sought to highlight the dominant position the JD(S) is in in many wards across Bengaluru, and expressed confidence of the party winning more than 100 seats. "At the meeting, it was suggested that the JD(S) continue the alliance with the BJP only if we are offered 100 or more seats. Otherwise, our leaders have been asked to be prepared to fight the elections by ourselves, and to identify candidates for each ward," the source added.

Another senior JD(S) leader, pointing to the BJP's recent debacles in the byelections, questioned the saffron party's credibility to assess the regional party's strengths and weaknesses. "Fighting the Assembly elections is different to contesting elections at the ward level. Hope BJP leaders understand this," the senior leader said.

JD(S) leaders are learnt to have warned Kumaraswamy of a possible rift within the party should the Union Minister agree to the BJP's demand for a greater number of seats in the GBA elections.

Raising ticket prices inevitable, says KSRTC chairman

TUMAKURU, DHNS: Raising the price of tickets on state-run buses is inevitable if the rates of petrol and diesel continue to soar, said Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) Chairman S R Srinivas in Tumakuru on Saturday.

"The price of diesel was first hiked by Rs 3.75, and further increased by 90 paise. Consequently, bus fares have to be raised to offset the rising costs. We are currently in the process of disbursing arrears to the tune of Rs 1,260 crore to KSRTC workers. KSRTC is already running under loss," said Srinivas.

In a tongue-in-cheek remark, Srinivas quipped that buses cannot run on water.

No to name change

Srinivas sought to differ with his Congress party colleague and Home Minister G Parameshwara on renaming Tumakuru as Bengaluru north.

"The people of Tumakuru will not accept the district's name being changed," said the KSRTC chairman.



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OBITUARY



SUJATHA DE MAGRY

Born: May 24, 1934
Died: May 11, 2026

Burial of Ashes:

Sat, June 13, 2026 at 3:00pm
SULOCO Winery & Farm
Honsethalli, near Mulbagal

Celebration of Life:

Sat, June 20, 2026 (Online)
Mourned by the families of brother Sam Stephen, children Roger de Magry, Lorraine Harrison, and Cookie Williams, friends & relatives.

BJP chief Nitin Nabin to address 'Prashikshan Varg' today

He's likely to hold separate meeting with party's SIR team



Nitin Nabin

PRATHIMA NANDAKUMAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

BJP national president Nitin Nabin will address the concluding session of the Bengaluru North district 'Prashikshan Varg' (training class) on Sunday.

The training class is part of the statewide Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Maha Abhiyan (campaign) that aims to strengthen the ideological commitment of grassroots workers and train the cadres on institutional processes, while apprising them of the challenges facing the nation.

The training classes are being held across 1,156 locations and will reach two lakh party workers and office-bearers from across the 39 organisational districts.

While the cadres will be trained in the party's core philosophy - integral humanism, nationalism and good governance as part of the ideological grounding, a panel of experts will deliberate on a wide range of subjects - the history, ideology and work methodology of

the BJP.

The party workers will be educated on electoral preparedness by training them in booth level management, especially the "Panna Pramukh" concept that encourages the party worker to own the responsibility of his booth and to connect with each voter in his booth.

The voter outreach is crucial especially when the voter list is under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in the state.

During his visit, the national president is expected to hold a separate meeting with BJP's SIR team too.

In the social responsibility session, the participants will deliberate on the emerging challenges before the country, the national policies, international issues, and the impact of central government welfare schemes.

With the fast changing media ecosystem, the BJP has introduced a session on interaction with the media, leveraging the social media and tackling the Artificial Intelligence era.

The Prashikshan Varg, which concludes by month-end will also educate the newly elected teams (booth, mandal, district and state units) on the challenges facing the state and also highlight the failures of

the Congress government in Karnataka, while sharing insights into party's expansion and scope of work.

The party is also planning a series of programmes from Jun 5 to June 21, to showcase the achievements of the central government as the Narendra Modi government completes 12 years

Series of meetings

BJP national president Nitin Nabin kicks off his maiden visit to Bengaluru after his election to the top party post, with a breakfast meeting with former chief minister BS Yediyurappa at latter's Dhavalagiri residence around 9 am, followed by visit to historic Shri Kadu Malleshwara Swamy Temple in Malleshwaram, along with state BJP president BY Vijayendra.

He will reach the party office 'Jagannath Bhavan' around 11.10 am, where he will chair a detailed organisational meeting with MPs, MLAs, MLCs, state office-bearers, Morcha presidents, general secretaries, divisional in-charges, district presidents and the state training team, before presiding over the State Core Committee meeting.

In the evening, he will address the Bengaluru North District Training Class at Ramada Resort, Yelahanka, followed by an interaction with the BJP's state SIR team.

Cabinet reshuffle likely this month: Cong MLA

KOLAR, DHNS: We are hopeful of the state Cabinet reshuffle being carried out this month, and we expect that around 15 incumbent ministers may be dropped and fresh faces inducted in their stead, said Congress MLA from Bangarpet S N Narayanaswami in Kolar on Saturday.

"The Cabinet reshuffle was originally slated to take place after the government completed two-and-a-half years in office. We have now completed three years in office, and we are confident of the exercise being undertaken this month. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his deputy DK Shivakumar, AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, party general secretaries K C Venugopal and Randeep Singh Surjewala are likely to meet and discuss the reshuffle. We are planning to leave for Delhi after May 29," he said.

On BJP's claims of there having been no development in state under Congress, he drew the party's attention to the list of accomplishments reeled out during Congress' recent 'Sadhana Samavesha' in Tumakuru. "In addition to guarantee schemes, a number of development projects have been undertaken. The BJP appears not to have taken note of these," he said.

LIFE WITH LIVESTOCK



A cowherd crosses the road along with his cattle as it rains in Mysuru on Saturday evening. DH PHOTO/HAMPA NAGARAJ

Digital TC system for II PUC students on trial basis

BENGALURU, DHNS

The School Education and Literacy Department, which introduced digital marks cards for second PUC and SSLC students from this year, has now come out with a Digital Transfer Certificate (Digital TC) system.

This facility, however, will be available for students who have passed the second PUC this year.

The Department of Pre-University Education has issued an order permitting principals of PU colleges to issue "Digital Transfer Certificates" (Digital TC) on a trial basis.

Soon after the Second PUC annual examination is completed, the result data will be used to generate the digital TC automatically. Once the data is uploaded, students can directly download the TC through their DigiLocker accounts.

Meanwhile, the department

has also simplified the Transfer Certificate (TC) by removing unnecessary information, including fee dues, scholarship details and attendance records. Such information will not be available on the digital TC.

However, for accurate linking of a student's academic records, the digital TC will include the SATS (Student Achievement Tracking System) number along with the examination registration number and Aadhaar ID.

Additionally, if principals do not record any negative remarks within the stipulated time, the software will automatically print the conduct as "Good."

Since digital TCs will carry a secure QR code, higher education institutions and Aadhaar centres can instantly verify their authenticity. The department stated in the order that this will help prevent fake TCs.

Moreover, as the TC will be available after the announcement of results, students will not have to run around colleges for the principal's physical signature.

The government has clarified that the digital TC will be valid for higher education admissions.

On a trial basis, this facility will be available only to freshers who have passed the second PUC in all government pre-university colleges this year. Private students, repeaters, and those seeking transfer certificates must continue to apply to the principal and obtain the TC at the college level.

The department officials clarified, "The digital TC issued through DigiLocker does not require the principal's physical signature and must be considered an authenticated document valid for higher education admissions."

Five of a family killed in Cruiser-tanker collision near Wadi

WADI (KALABURAGI DISTRICT), DHNS: Five members of a family from Ingalagi village were killed in a head-on collision between a Cruiser and a tanker near Ladlapur in Chittapur taluk of Kalaburagi district in the wee hours of Saturday.

The deceased are identified

as Mehboob Ali (42), Tola Basha (30), Hussain Shahapur (47), Rasool Bi (43) and Fathima (40).

The accident occurred when the victims were returning home from Yadgir, in the Cruiser, after admitting an ailing relative to hospital.

A speeding tanker heading

towards Yadgir rammed into the Cruiser, killing all five occupants on the spot, a police officer said. The impact of the crash was such that the front portion of the Cruiser vehicle was completely crushed.

The bodies were shifted to Wadi government hospital for the post-mortem. The Wadi

police have registered a case and investigation is underway.

Expressing grief over deaths on his X platform, District In-charge Minister Priyank Kharge said that he directed Kalaburagi SP to provide all necessary assistance to the family members of the deceased.

The appellants had questioned the will primarily on the ground that it was unregistered, besides alleging forgery.

The court said while suspi-



Udupi taluk, consisting primarily of agricultural lands and ancestral properties.

The court rejected the challenge by his wife and children, through legal representatives, alleging that the will was

a will is to alter ordinary line of succession.

The court upheld the validity of a will executed in 1983 by B Sheena Nairi, who bequeathed his agricultural and other properties in Karnataka to his sister, Laxmi Nairthy.

Nairi was a permanent resident of Mumbai and was a chartered accountant. Besides owning a residential flat in Mumbai, he owned substantial other immovable properties at Brahmavar and Chanthar,

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Supreme Court has made it clear that the mere fact that a will has not been registered cannot be treated as a suspicious circumstance questioning its genuineness, as law does not mandate registration of wills.

A bench of Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and Vijay Bishnoi also held that the exclusion of natural heirs from a will does not automatically make the document suspicious, noting that the very purpose of executing

heirs cannot be sufficient to vitiate the will in question, particularly when the will clearly specifies that the testator has not done any injustice to his wife, children or other relatives, and that he has given enough to his wife and children, residing in Mumbai.

The bench clarified that mutation entries in revenue records do not confer any title on a person, as they are made only for fiscal purposes.

It said the will was duly

proved through the testimony of an attesting witness, who confirmed that the testator had executed the document voluntarily and while in a sound state of mind.

The appellants, despite raising allegations of forgery, failed to produce evidence to support their claims.

Dismissing the appeal, the court found no reason to interfere with the findings of trial court, first appellate court and Karnataka high court.

High input costs hit farmers ahead of sowing season

Tractor rentals go up; fertilisers in short supply

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

With the Kharif (monsoon) cropping season getting underway across the state, the farming community is facing a severe financial crunch.

A sharp increase in the costs of essential agricultural inputs ranging from tractor rentals to fertilisers has significantly pushed up the initial investment required for cultivation this year, leaving farmers in deep distress.

The Kharif season sees cultivation across nearly 70 lakh hectares in Karnataka, with farmers heavily dependent on crops like ragi, paddy, jowar, bajra, tur, and groundnut. However, external economic shocks, including the West Asia crisis, have disrupted supply chains, leading to a direct surge in fuel and fertilizer prices.

Traditional tilling with oxen has drastically reduced across the state, making farmers almost entirely reliant on mechanised farming. However, the rise in diesel prices has made tractor rentals expensive.

Last year, renting a tractor cost between Rs 900 and 1,000 per hour. This

year, owners are charging anywhere between Rs 1,200 and 1,300 per hour. Tractor owners defend the hike, citing the high cost of fuel, driver wages, and general maintenance.

Compounding the problem is a severe shortage of chemical fertilisers. Agriculture Minister N Cheluvarayasu recently confirmed that the state is currently facing a deficit of nearly 38,000 metric tonnes of chemical fertilizers.

Taking advantage of this shortage, retail prices for most chemical fertiliser bags have gone up by Rs 100-200. Even organic options like farmyard manure have seen a spike, with a single tractor load costing up to Rs 2,000 more than it did last year. Combined with a spike in labour wages, the total cost of sowing has hit a steep Rs 5,000 per acre.

As the cost of living and farming both skyrocket, farmer unions are calling on the state government to step in before the sowing window closes.

"The farming community in the state is in a very vulnerable position. Skyrocketing input costs have made agriculture unsustainable this season. The government must immediately announce a special package providing direct subsidies for inputs, interest-free loans, and special price support to protect us from these losses," said Yashavantha T, State General Secretary of the Prantha Raitha Sangha.

Govt asks NCERT to include chapter on 'groundwater' in class 10 social science

BENGALURU, DHNS: The state government has urged the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to introduce a chapter on 'groundwater' in the class 10 social science textbook.

Minor Irrigation Minister N S Boseraju noted that the existing NCERT Class 10 social science textbook, *Contemporary India-II*, contains a chapter on Water Resources.

"The current curriculum largely focuses on surface water, with limited attention to groundwater — despite it being India's most critical freshwater resource," the minister said, announcing that the groundwater directorate, which reports to him, had written to NCERT.

"Nearly 97% of the liquid freshwater available on Earth exists as groundwater. Around 50% of domestic water usage and nearly 25% of agricultural dependence in India rely directly

on groundwater sources," Boseraju said. He warned that climate change, declining surface water availability and increasing water consumption are intensifying pressure on groundwater reserves across India.

The government, Boseraju said, has highlighted in its communication that over-exploited, critical, and semi-critical groundwater zones have risen sharply over the past two decades, while groundwater quality continues to deteriorate due to contamination and unsustainable extraction.

In its letter to NCERT, the groundwater directorate has pointed out that school curricula in the USA include detailed lessons on groundwater systems, aquifer behaviour, permeability, porosity, groundwater flow and contamination.

"The next generation must understand the real importance of water conservation at the school level itself," Boseraju said.

Bengaluru liquor stores continue to charge old rates

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

Though the government reduced the prices of beer and premium liquor 10 days ago, many shops and bars in city are still selling them at old, higher rates.

When customers ask about lower prices, shop owners claim they are just selling old stock to make extra profit.

On May 11, the government started a new tax system based on alcohol percentage. This has reduced beer prices by Rs 10 to Rs 75 a bottle. But regular shops and bars are not passing on the benefit to buyers. Only a few government-run MSIL shops are selling at new rates.

When questioned, liquor outlet owners said they were clearing out old stock, a pretext citizens allege is a scam to pocket extra profit.

The main excuse used by vendors is delay in updated MRP labelling on fresh bottles. Sources state that since manufacturing units

require a grace period of 10 days to print and distribute bottles with updated price stickers, outlets are capitalising on the transition.

The policy change brought down prices of most beer brands, alongside price drops for several popular premium liquor brands.

Taking note of the widespread exploitation, the excise department has stepped in with a stern warning for retail licensees.

"We issued strict directives to all CL-2 (retail shops) and CL-II (MSIL smart boutiques) licensees to prominently display revised MRP price list for all liquor brands. If any outlet fails to display chart or continues to overcharge, severe punitive action will be taken," said Nagarajappa, joint commissioner of the department.

The department has instructed all district officers to conduct surprise inspections. Consumers have been urged to demand receipts and report instances of price gouging directly to local excise inspectors.

CM lays foundation stone for cricket stadium at Anekal

Proposed facility will have seating capacity of 80,000

BENGALURU, DHNS

Amidst opposition, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, on Saturday laid the foundation stone for the new cricket stadium to be constructed at Suryanagar in Anekal.

Siddaramaiah opined that the stadium will aid the comprehensive development of the region by generating employment opportunities, attracting tourists, and in turn fuelling the economic growth.

"The stadium in Gujarat has a seating capacity of 90,000. Now, the new stadium we are constructing here will have 80,000 seating capacity and will be the second biggest stadium in the country. This will provide employment opportunities for the people around and aid the economic growth of the surrounding areas," he said.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said that this was the government's gift for Bengaluru citizens



A model of the new international cricket stadium at Suryanagar, in Anekal. PTI PHOTO.

D K Suresh, former Bangalore Rural MP, said that an international stadium should be constructed at all the four corners of Bengaluru.

Farmers from around the area had earlier opposed the construction of the stadium stating that it would harm the Bannerghatta eco sensitive zone. Such a construction violates the recommendations made by the Central Empowered Committee's (CEC), they had said.

The first phase of the project is estimated to cost Rs 900 crore and is expected to be completed in the next three

India's 2nd biggest stadium

- Seating capacity: 80,000
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- Seating bowl design inspired by the works of Walter P Moore
- Stadium facade planned to be designed as an iconic architectural feature that reflects Karnataka's cultural identity and cricketing heritage

years. Noting that the Karnataka



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah takes a fresh guard on the sidelines of laying of foundation stone for a new cricket stadium at Anekal on Saturday.

Housing Board (KHB) had taken up the construction at its own cost. Siddaramaiah said that KHB moving beyond construction of houses was a move in the right direction.

Siddaramaiah also laid the foundation stone for Surya Divine and Surya Shine, two other projects by the Karnataka Housing Board and

launched the 'Namma Mane' campaign. "KHB is helping many get a roof over their heads. Given that the price of land is increasing by the day, the KHB projects are helping the middle-class and the poor own a house at a lower price," he said.

KHB is expected to generate close to Rs 20,000 crore from selling vacant sites.

NEET aspirant ends life in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, DHNS: A NEET aspirant died by suicide under Station Bazaar Police Station limits in Kalaburagi on Saturday. Bhagyashree Patil, who had scored 92% marks in IPU examination, hanged herself at her home in the afternoon.

Responding to press persons, her father Rajashekhar Patil claimed that she was dejected in her life and NEET question paper leak might be the reason. However, he did not cite question paper leaks as reason for suicide in the complaint lodged by him. He also stated that he doesn't want to blame anyone for the suicide.

DPR for B'loru-Tumakuru metro to come before Cabinet

BENGALURU, PTI: Home Minister G Parameshwara on Saturday said that a DPR for the proposed Madavara (Bengaluru)-Tumakuru Metro Rail project would be placed before the Cabinet for discussion and further decision-making. He was speaking to reporters after receiving the Detailed Project Report (DPR) report for the Madavara-Tumakuru Metro Rail project at Vidhana Soudha in the presence of Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh and other senior officials.

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Alia Bhatt stuns with Malabar Gold & Diamonds creations

Actor Alia Bhatt made a striking appearance at the 79th Cannes Film Festival wearing bespoke sapphire and diamond jewellery from Malabar Gold & Diamonds, bringing together refined craftsmanship and contemporary elegance on one of the world's most recognised red carpets.

Styled in a custom ensemble by Rhea Kapoor, Alia Bhatt paired her Cannes look with a curated selection of jewellery pieces featuring Ceylon sapphires and diamonds from Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Her jewellery selection featured Malabar Gold and Diamond's statement earrings, sapphire rings and a diamond pendant designed with contemporary detailing and precision craftsmanship. Together, the pieces reflected a balance of sophistication, gemstone artistry and understated luxury.

Highlights from the curated edit included the White Quartz Briquette Earrings, featuring three-carat pear-shaped earrings with white quartz briquettes that reveal remarkable precision through their fluid cuts, designed to move effortlessly with light.

Adding depth to the styling were statement rings including the Ceylon Sapphire Oval Ring, where an eight-carat oval Ceylon sapphire reveals ocean-blue depth, encircled by brilliant round diamonds that sharpen its



colour and fire. The look also featured the Pear-Shaped Ceylon Sapphire Ring, showcasing 8.8 carats of Ceylon sapphire, reminiscent of a falling raindrop, revealing remarkable depth and clarity.

Completing the look was the Pear-Shaped Diamond Pendant, a four-carat pear-shaped diamond suspended in perfect balance, its elongated form creating a refined stream of light.

The Cannes Film Festival appearance highlighted Malabar Gold & Diamonds' continued focus on fine craftsmanship, gemstone quality and contemporary design interpretation.

M P Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, said, "Cannes Film Festival represents a global platform where fashion, artistry and craftsmanship come together.

Through this collaboration with Alia Bhatt, we wanted to present jewellery that reflects timeless elegance while showcasing the finesse and design excellence associated with Malabar Gold & Diamonds".

The appearance marks another milestone in Malabar Gold & Diamonds' continued engagement with global fashion and luxury platforms, further strengthening the brand's international positioning.

Curated by **DH Brandspot**



Diesel, petrol, CNG prices hiked third time in eight days

Fuel price, from Page 3

Petrol prices in major parts of the country are either above Rs 100 per litre or close to it. Among metro cities, petrol is costliest in Kolkata (Rs 110.64 per litre). In Mumbai it is priced at Rs 108.49 per litre while in Chennai it costs Rs 105.31 per litre.

The government claims that the retail price hikes are targeted to help narrow the losses of oil marketing companies. As per the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, OMCs were estimated to incur a loss of nearly Rs 1,000 crore per day until the middle of this month due to surge in global crude prices.

The May 15 hike in retail prices of petrol and diesel was estimated to trim the per day losses of OMCs to Rs 750 crore.

At the peak Brent crude oil price of around \$126 per barrel due to the disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, the Government of India was absorbing nearly Rs 24 per litre on petrol and Rs 30 per litre on diesel, official sources said.

"India is the only major economy in the world to have cut retail fuel prices through the Russia-Ukraine window. India is the only major economy in the world to have held retail fuel prices essentially unchanged through the first 76 days of the Hormuz disruption," a source claimed.

While the government had claimed that it kept the pump prices low till May 15 to shield consumers from inflation, Opposition parties accused it of delaying price hikes until after key Assembly elections.

The cumulative OMC revision of just under Rs 5 per litre across May 15, 19 and 23 is the smallest material upward movement of any major economy outside the directly subsidising Gulf producers, the sources said, claiming that India still has one of the lowest absolute pump prices in the non-subsidising world.

Govt took down CJP website, but 'cockroaches never die': Founder

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder, Abhijeet Dipke, on Saturday alleged another round of government crackdown on his satirical digital outfit blocking access to its social media accounts, hacking into his personal Instagram account and taking down of its website.

This comes two days after CJP's account on X was withheld in India following which Dipke created a new one.

"The government has taken down our iconic website. Ten lakh cockroaches had signed up on our website. Six lakh cockroaches had signed a petition to demand the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan," Dipke wrote in a social media post on X.

"Why is the government so scared of cockroaches? But this dictatorial behaviour is opening the eyes of India's youth. Our only crime is we were demanding a better future for ourselves. But you can't get rid of us that easily. We're



ABHIJEET DIPKE
CJP founder on X
The government has taken down our iconic website. Ten lakh cockroaches had signed up on our website. Six lakh cockroaches had signed a petition to demand the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan

working on a new home right now. Cockroaches never die," he added.

A day before, the outfit launched a campaign seeking Pradhan's resignation over alleged systemic failures in the education sector and the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak. Later on Friday, Dipke said he was receiving death threats and shared screenshots of the threat messages.

According to Dipke, the fresh crackdown includes hacking of the CJP's and his personal Instagram pages, withholding of the X account and taking down of the back-up account.

"Please note that we current-

ly do not have access to any of our platforms. Any post made after this should not be considered an official statement from the Cockroach Janta Party," he said.

The Boston-based political communication strategist linked the actions to its campaign against Pradhan. "Action should have been taken against the Education Minister for the paper leak. For the student who lost his life due to the government's failure. But in new India, action is being taken against the Cockroach Janta Party for demanding accountability," he said.

In a post shared by its back-

up handle, 'Cockroach is Back', on X, CJP said it had reached the milestone of "one million registered Cockroaches" on its website in less than a week. "The movement keeps getting bigger despite all the crack-down!" it said.

Within a week of its launch, CJP's popularity has skyrocketed among India's Gen-Z on the basis on its meme-driven movement against youth unemployment, inflation and exam leaks.

Formed after the infamous cockroach comment of Chief Justice Surya Kant, the collective amassed over 20 million Instagram followers in less than a week, rapidly outpacing major political parties online.

Meanwhile, political opinion on CJP remains divided. Union minister and Bengal BJP leader Sukanta Majumdar alleged that nearly half of the CJP followers were from Pakistan. But Jan Surraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor said such a huge popularity underscored public distress over unemployment, corruption and price rise, and the government should be concerned.

Govt notifies new minimum wages

Wages, from Page 3

The verdict mandated fixation of minimum wages based on the cost of food, clothing, shelter, education and medicinal needs.

This notification has come more than a year after the labour department issued a draft of the minimum wages. It is learnt that a few ministers in the Cabinet opposed the minimum wage revision on the

grounds that the rates were "too high" for employers and businesses to afford.

For the purpose of minimum wages, all workers have been divided into four categories based on skill levels - highly skilled, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled.

The location of work has been put under three categories: zone-1 (GBA), zone-2 (all district centres and city corporations) and zone-3 (all other

regions).

In a circular, KEA president B C Prabhakar said the final notification on minimum wages had "legal infirmities".

According to Prabhakar, the final notification has been issued under the Minimum Wages Act, which he said was "repealed" by the Code on Wages that kicked in from November 2025. "...and hence [the notification] is without the authority of law."

Prabhakar also argued that the Code on Wages had abolished the concept of Scheduled Employments.

The notification also violates a high court order, Prabhakar said.

The court, he said, had held that no order passed by the minimum wage advisory board at its July 29, 2025 meeting or subsequently shall be implemented till the next date of hearing.

Revised Minimum Wages						
Skill level	Zone-1		Zone-2		Zone-3	
	Daily	Monthly	Daily	Monthly	Daily	Monthly
Highly Skilled	Rs 1,196.69	Rs 31,114.02	Rs 1,087.90	Rs 28,285.47	Rs 989	Rs 25,714.07
Skilled	Rs 1,087.90	Rs 28,825.47	Rs 989	Rs 25,714.07	Rs 899.09	Rs 23,376.43
Semi Skilled	Rs 989	Rs 25,714.07	Rs 899.09	Rs 23,376.43	Rs 817.35	Rs 21,251.30
Unskilled	Rs 899.09	Rs 23,376.43	Rs 817.35	Rs 21,251.30	Rs 743.05	Rs 19,319.36

10-year-old girl raped, murdered in TN; 2 held

Incident triggers outrage; neighbour among the arrested

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

The sexual assault and brutal murder of a 10-year-old girl, who was playing outside her house in Coimbatore's Sultur, allegedly by her neighbour, led to massive outrage across Tamil Nadu on Saturday, with the Opposition asking tough questions to the fortnight-old TVK government.

As the incident hit headlines with relatives of the minor girl holding a protest, Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay termed the murder and sexual assault as "horrific" and promised to ensure justice for the minor girl. Vijay also said two persons have been arrested for their

involvement in the crime.

R V Ramya Bharathi, Inspector General of Police (West Zone), told reporters in Coimbatore that police received information on May 21 at 8.30 pm that the minor girl playing outside her house in Sultur was missing since 5 pm.

"A case was registered at 10 pm, and five special teams were formed to locate the missing child. During the course of investigation, we got to know that 33-year-old Karthi, a neighbour, was also missing along with the child. He was known to the victim's family," she said.

Karthi, originally from Nagapattinam district in the Cauvery Delta region, has

been residing in Sultur for the past few years.

"We received information that the accused was hiding on the first floor of an apartment in Coimbatore. On spotting a police team, the accused attempted to escape by jumping from the first floor, resulting in fractures in his right hand and right leg," she added.

During interrogation, the accused confessed to sexually assaulting the minor and subsequently murdering her inside a coconut grove, the IG said, adding that another neighbour Mohan (30) was also arrested for helping Karthi.

"As the case pertains to the assault of a minor child, it is being altered to include the provisions of the POCSO Act, and stringent action is being taken," Ramya Bharathi said.

The CM said his government will firmly act to ensure that those who commit such heinous acts against women and children receive severe punishment under the law.

Leader of Opposition Udhayanidhi Stalin and AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami asked tough questions of the TVK government, asking what had happened to the "tall talk" of maintaining law and order during the election campaign.

"This heinous incident has sent shockwaves across the country. The voice demanding true justice for this murder is echoing from all quarters", Udhayanidhi said, alleging that in just 12 days, over 30 major incidents, including sexual violence and ganja smuggling, have been reported.

Palaniswami said the government should ensure the safety of women and children, and demanded that the perpetrators be given the strictest punishment under the law.

Meanwhile, the National Commission for Women (NCW) said it has taken cognisance of the incident and has sought a detailed action taken report from the Tamil Nadu DGP within seven days.

On SC order, Centre empowers DCs...

Garbage, from Page 3

"The directions, if any, issued by the DCs under the delegated authority are understood as directives issued in furtherance of the orders of this court," a bench of justices Pankaj Mithal and S V N Bhatti said. Accordingly, the DCs have been told to constitute a special cell dedicated to implement the 2026 version of the SWM rules within their jurisdictions. The regional officers of the respective pollution control boards/committees will be part of the cell and conduct field inspections to check for violations.

"The DCs are directed to conduct virtual spot inspections of the dumping sites, implement the rules, and fortnightly prepare and forward the report to the designated secretaries in the respective states," the court has said, directing states to incentivise good performance.

The ministry's notification, however, noted that the Centre may revoke the delegation of powers "if such a course of action is necessary in public interest".

SUMMER SOLACE



A monkey takes a watermelon slice on a hot summer day in Jammu on Saturday. PTI PHOTO

Trump's fresh invite to Modi a year after...

Rubio, From Page 3

Modi requested Rubio to convey his "warm greetings" to Trump and said that he looked forward to "continued exchanges" with the US president, according to a press release issued by the PMO.

"We discussed sustained progress in the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and issues related to regional and global peace and security. India and the United States will continue to work closely for the global good," Modi posted on X.

Rubio arrived in New Delhi after a stopover in Kolkata, where he, along with his wife, visited the Missionaries of Charity founded by Saint Teresa early on Saturday.

"News! Secretary Marco Rubio extended an invite on behalf of President Donald Trump for Prime Minister Modi to visit the White House in the near future," Sergio Gor, Washington's envoy to New Delhi, posted on X.

Neither New Delhi nor Washington indicated when the PM would visit the White House.

The US is keen to raise its oil and gas exports to India. India has significantly expanded its energy trade with the US in recent years. The US share in India's crude oil imports rose from 4.6% in 2024-25 to 8.1% during April-November of 2025-26. Imports of American crude also increased by over 90% year-on-year in the first eight months of 2025-26. India's LNG and LPG purchases from the US have also grown steadily.

The West Asia war has led to energy supply disruptions, adding pressure on the import bills of India.

While the Trump administration earlier allowed India to buy sanctions-hit Russia's seaborne oil, Washington also wants New Delhi to buy more oil from Venezuela, now controlled by the US.

Modi is likely to visit Évian-les-Bains, Haute-Savoie,

France, to attend the G7 summit between June 15 and 17. Trump will also be attending the summit. The PM may fly to Washington before or after his visit to France and meet the US president, if the schedules of both leaders allow such an opportunity. The two sides may discuss other probable dates for the Modi-Trump meeting at the White House.

Trump's tariff war against India, his move to force India to stop buying oil from Russia, his repeated claims about mediating a truce between India and Pakistan and his bonhomie with the civil-military leaders of Pakistan stressed New Delhi's ties with Washington over the past one year.

Trump had invited Modi to have a brief stopover in Washington while the latter was returning from Canada, where both had attended the G7 summit in June 2025. But with Trump then hosting Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, the PM turned down the invite.

US and Iran signal progress in talks to end war

Iran, from Page 1

Iran has demanded supervision of the strait, an end to the US blockade on its ports and the lifting of sanctions on Iranian oil sales.

Iranian Foreign Minis-

try spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said: "The trend this week has been towards a reduction in disputes, but there are still issues that need to be discussed through mediators. We will have to wait and see where

the situation ends in the next three or four days."

Pakistan's army chief Munir left Tehran on Saturday after talks with Iran's top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

NEET-UG, from Page 1

Designed for scale, undermined by institutional fragility

This rapid turnover has hindered the development of stable institutional processes.

The second issue is logistical capacity. As of December 2024, the NTA had only 22 employees on deputation, 38 contract staff and 138 outsourced personnel, an extremely thin permanent workforce for an agency conducting more than 18 national examinations annually across 5,500 centres in 550 cities. A 2026 report found that 50% of the senior posts created as part of the post-2024 reform measures remain vacant.

The third issue concerns grievance redressal. The NTA has no publicly available standalone Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) performance audit assessing its end-to-end examination security, vendor management, data protocols or grievance mechanisms. The fact that a parliamen-

tary panel had to summon the NTA chief over the 2026 controversy points to persistent concerns about institutional accountability and oversight.

The accountability vacuum

The NTA is registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. Unlike the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), a constitutional body, or the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), a statutory body, NTA lacks direct parliamentary accountability. Parliament has also been informed that neither the UPSC nor the SSC has reported a paper leak in the past five years. The UPSC conducts a limited number of examinations within a highly concentrated institutional framework with minimal reliance on core outsourcing. By contrast, the NTA was designed for scale and speed, administering exam-

inations across hundreds of cities, while its governance architecture failed to evolve in line with its expanding operational responsibilities.

The medical entrance ecosystem has no real equivalent in civil service recruitment. In NEET, every mark carries significant monetary implications: tuition costs saved, institutional tier accessed and long-term career trajectories shaped. The coaching industry itself is a multi-thousand-crore sector built around optimising these outcomes. Paper-leak networks operate on a similar economic logic. In the 2026 controversy, the accused allegedly sold access to the paper for Rs 15 lakh, which was then circulated further down the chain for Rs 10 lakh. Conviction rates in paper-leak cases are estimated to be between five and ten per cent. Civil service examinations do not generate a comparable commercial

ecosystem around leaked papers; NEET demonstrably does. In a system where management quotas and capitation fees permit the purchase of medical seats through legal financial channels, the moral boundary between legal and illegal payment mechanisms becomes narrower than it ought to be.

The reform gap

Following the 2024 controversy, the Ministry of Education constituted a seven-member high-level committee chaired by former ISRO Chairman K Radhakrishnan, tasked with reforming the examination system, strengthening data security and overhauling grievance redressal mechanisms. The committee submitted 101 recommendations, including a transition to computer-based testing, the creation of dedicated in-house operational units

and strengthening of permanent staffing. However, several key proposals remain in pilot stages or on paper.

Last week, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced that NEET will transition to a computer-based format from next year. The announcement echoes earlier post-2024 assurances and has been met with scepticism rather than relief.

The United Doctors Front has moved the Supreme Court seeking the conversion of the NTA from a society into a statutory authority directly accountable to Parliament, with CAG oversight and a legally mandated grievance redressal mechanism. The Federation of All India Medical Association has filed a separate petition seeking judicial supervision of the re-examination process. Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee has

recommended greater reliance on pen-and-paper examinations, citing the CBSE and UPSC models, proposed the creation of a national blacklist of firms involved in examination irregularities, and suggested deploying the NTA's accumulated surplus of nearly Rs 448 crore towards cybersecurity and infrastructure upgrades.

These institutional demands are reasonable and overdue. However, reform of the NTA, no matter how comprehensive, cannot in itself dismantle the commercial incentive structure that renders NEET vulnerable. The broader question is whether India's centralised examination architecture can sustain the scale it is being asked to handle.

(Shantanu Sharma is assistant professor of Political Science at the Amity Institute of Liberal Arts, Amity University, Bengaluru. Views are personal)

NEW POWER PLAY

The former IAS officer seems to have Rahul Gandhi’s ear

Brijendra eyes pole position in Haryana Cong with ‘yatra’

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS



Brijendra Singh with Rahul Gandhi during his yatra. FACEBOOK

He excelled in cricket in his teenage years, representing Haryana in U-15 and U-19 tournaments, was a topper in studies, and secured the ninth rank in the Civil Service exams to become an IAS officer before winning his first electoral battle on a BJP ticket seven years ago.

Much water has since flowed under the bridge, and Brijendra Singh — son of veteran leader Birender Singh — is at a crossroads as he seeks to find a place of pride in Haryana Congress where former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda still rules the roost.

On Saturday, Brijendra — who quit the BJP to join the Congress ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls — concluded his “Sadbhav Yatra” in Hooda’s stronghold Rohtak, looking to corner the BJP and unify the faction-ridden state Congress unit. While Hooda skipped the programme, Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala and Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee chief Rao Narender Singh were present.

The yatra started on October 5, 2025, in Danoda village, Narwana, and saw the 53-year-old politician cover around 2,800 km as he visited all 90 Haryana Assembly seats on foot.

It did not get an official stamp from the Hooda-dom-

inated party apparatus, but wrangled the endorsement of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, who joined the “yatra” in Gurugram earlier this month.

Succession plan?

With Hooda at 78 and Birender Singh at 80 staring at retirement, the stage is set for a next-generation takeover. It was against this backdrop that Brijendra’s yatra caught eyeballs. The question arose as to whether he could checkmate Deepender Hooda, whom his father wants to succeed in the party hierarchy.

Hooda Sr and Singh are maternal cousins, and have illustrious legacies. Hooda’s father Chaudhary Ranbir Singh Hooda was a member of the

erstwhile Constituent Assembly, while Singh’s grandfather Chhotu Ram was an iconic agrarian reformer in pre-Independence India.

Singh was instrumental when Hooda became Haryana CM for the first time, amid Bhajan Lal’s detractors ganging up against him in 2005. Since then, Hooda has consolidated his grip on the Haryana Congress. However, the cousins’ ties unravelled in 2013 when backroom manoeuvres denied Singh a seat in the Manmohan Singh government.

Singh was informed of being inducted into the Cabinet, but his name was removed at the last minute. To this date, Singh claims it was Hooda who managed to change the script. Months after the 2014 Lok

Sabha polls, Singh quit the Congress and joined the BJP. He returned to the Rajya Sabha and became a minister in the Narendra Modi government even as his son Brijendra served the Haryana government as a 1998-batch IAS officer.

Just before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Brijendra quit the IAS to contest from the Hisar Lok Sabha seat on a BJP ticket. He defeated the JJP’s Dushyant Chautala and the Congress’ Bhavya Bishnoi — grandsons of former CMs Om Prakash Chautala and Bhajan Lal, respectively.

But all was not well for the father-son duo in the BJP. The father was vocal against the three farm laws, as farmers and Jats were his core constituency; Brijendra strategically kept quiet. The BJP’s handling of the women wrestlers’ protest ruptured the relationship further.

Brijendra was among the very few BJP MPs who openly supported the women wrestlers, and was in the Congress by April 2024, saying there were “certain reasons why I was not happy there (in BJP)”.

Hooda hobbled

However, Hooda was not impressed with the return of his cousin with his son, which he perceived as a direct threat to his son Deepender’s primacy in the party. Despite being a sitting BJP MP, Brijendra was denied a ticket from Hisar. Then, in the October 2024

Assembly polls, Brijendra fought Uchana Kalan but lost by just 32 votes. Meanwhile, the Congress’ overall defeat under Hooda’s leadership gave his detractors another opening. The party’s central leadership was also unhappy with Hooda sidelining leaders like Kumari Selja, Surjewala, Birender Singh, and Ajay Yadav.

With the legislature party stacked with his supporters, Hooda staved off challenges to his position, but the central leadership sent a signal by delaying naming him the Leader of the Opposition by a year.

By then, Brijendra had been appointed vice-chairperson of the Congress’ Foreign Affairs Department, indicating that the central leadership would not play the factional game. His BJP stint did not bother them, and Brijendra appeared to have clicked with Rahul.

He claimed Rahul knew his plans, and later met him during the yatra. Hooda’s detractors like Selja, Surjewala, and Yadav participated in the yatra while Hooda stayed away, except when Rahul joined it. Like Rahul grew a beard during his Bharat Jodo Yatra, Brijendra grew one during his yatra.

A section in the Congress perceived Hooda’s political style as aggressive, which alienated several sections. The central leadership may be looking for alternatives. The question now is: Can Brijendra emerge as a new pole in Haryana?

Centre notifies draft rules for VB-G RAM G Act

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The central government on Saturday notified draft rules under the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 — the VB-G RAM G Act, for short.

They outlined the institutional and administrative framework for the new rural employment programme that will replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) from July 1.

Framed under Section 33 and other provisions of the new Act, the draft rules have been placed in the public domain for consultation with states, institutions, experts, worker groups, civil-society organisations, and the public. Objections and suggestions can be submitted till June 21.

The proposed rules address transitional provisions, constitution of a National-Level Steering Committee, formation of the Central Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Council, administrative expenses, grievance redressal, payment of wages and unemployment allowance, and expenditure beyond normative allocations, including for Union Territories without legislatures.

According to the Ministry of Rural Development, the rules aim to establish a comprehensive institutional, financial and governance framework for nationwide implementation of the Act through participatory consultation.

The draft Transitional Provisions Rules lay down the mechanism for shifting from MGNREGA to the new scheme,

BIG SHIFT

- VB-G RAM G to replace MGNREGA nationwide from July 1, 2026
- Annual rural employment guarantee raised from 100 days to 125 days
- Scheme linked to infrastructure creation, climate resilience and village planning
- Existing MGNREGA job cards to remain temporarily valid; ongoing works to continue

notified on May 11.

They are meant to ensure the continuation of ongoing works, settlement of liabilities, transfer of records, and protection of worker rights.

Existing e-KYC-verified MGNREGA job cards will remain temporarily valid until the new Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards are issued. Fresh work can be opened if ongoing projects fall short of labour demand.

Oversight

The rules propose a national-level steering committee to provide strategic guidance on implementation, normative allocations, convergence, monitoring and technology-enabled governance.

A Central Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Council has been proposed to support implementation, evaluation, monitoring and reporting.

The rules retain Direct Benefit Transfer for wage and unemployment allowance payments. Employment must be provided within 15 days of demand.

SC takes suo motu cognisance of Bhopal dowry death case

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Supreme Court has taken suo motu cognisance of the dowry death of former actor and model Twisha Sharma in Bhopal to address the issue of institutional bias and procedural discrepancies in her unnatural demise.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi decided to take up the matter on Monday.

On Saturday, the court registered the case as ‘In Re: Alleged Institutional Bias and Procedural Discrepancies in the Unnatural Death of a Young Girl at her Matrimonial Home’.

On the same day, a Bhopal court remanded Twisha’s husband Samarth Singh in police custody for seven days, while his mother and co-accused Giribala Singh said the police were yet to contact her for recording her statement in the high-profile case.

A four-member team of doctors from AIIMS Delhi will fly to Bhopal to conduct a second autopsy of Twisha’s body following the Madhya Pradesh High Court’s order.

16 die in T’gana as heatwave tightens grip across country

Temperatures to rise further from Sunday, IMD warns

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS



A man drinks water under the shade of a water tanker in Uttar Pradesh’s Prayagraj on Saturday. PTI

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy on Saturday said that 16 people have died due to heatstroke across seven districts of Telangana during the current summer season, as he held an emergency review meeting in the wake of heat wave conditions prevailing in the state since the last few days.

According to reports from district collectors, four deaths were recorded in Jayashankar Bhupalpally, three each in Warangal Urban, Karimnagar, and Nizamabad, and one each in Jogulamba Gadwal, Rangareddy, and Suryapet districts.

The minister ordered that compensation of Rs 4 lakh each be paid to the families of the deceased and that the process be completed without delay.

The meeting was convened against the backdrop of rapidly

rising temperatures and an intensifying heatwave across the state, further aggravated by a severe El Nino effect.

Summer Winds

Meanwhile, blistering heat and scorching summer winds swept across several parts of India on Saturday, pushing temperatures past 44° Celsius in several regions. The punishing weather forced hospitals in Punjab to operationalise heat stroke management units, while the IMD issued a heat-wave alert for three districts of Jharkhand for Monday.

The extreme conditions have begun to strain not just people, but also animals and

birds, with veterinarians and animal rescuers in Delhi reporting exhausted pigeons dropping unconscious from the sky, dehydrated eagles being picked up from roadsides, and street animals suffering from stomach toxicity amid the capital’s relentless heatwave.

In Rajasthan, Chittorgarh emerged as the hottest place in the state in the past 24 hours at 44.2° Celsius, as the meteorological department warned that temperatures were likely to rise further from Sunday.

Delhi, too, remained trapped in intense summer conditions despite strong winds, thunderstorms, and light rain early morning, bringing temporary relief to parts of the city after days of searing heat.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) warned that temperatures across Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh are likely to rise further from Sunday onwards.

Delhi has been reeling under heatwave conditions over the past few days, with temperatures crossing the 45° Celsius mark in several areas.

According to doctors, hospitals across Delhi-NCR are witnessing a rise in patients reporting heat-related ailments. (With PTI inputs)



PM Narendra Modi with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio during a meeting in New Delhi. PTI

US to prioritise business visas: Rubio

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The United States will introduce a new “America First” visa scheduling tool to prioritise the processing of applications, with preference for business professionals, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Saturday.

“Every visa decision is a national security decision, and I’m proud to empower the Americans who work here as they serve on the frontlines of advancing our interests and President Trump’s America First foreign policy,” he said.

Rubio also inaugurated the new Support Annex Building at the US Embassy here.

“We recognise that an orderly and secure consular

system is vital to solidify this important relationship. That’s why we’re introducing a new America First visa scheduling tool that prioritises business professionals who strengthen these ties,” Rubio said.

Rubio is scheduled to meet External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday. The two will later join their Australian and Japanese counterparts, Penny Wong and Toshimitsu Motegi, for a Quad Foreign Ministers’ meeting on Monday.

He said that India was at the cornerstone of how the US approached the Indo-Pacific, and not just through the Quad but bilaterally. “You see that in the \$20 billion that Indian companies invested in the

United States. You see it in their signing up for Pax Silica and the other opportunities we have to explore between two advanced economies,” he said.

‘Not about India’

Under a new immigration policy, the Trump administration has made it harder for temporary visa holders to obtain Green Cards from within the US, directing many applicants to complete the process from their home countries instead.

“This is not about India. This is a global situation that we’re dealing with. Our country, unfortunately, faced a very serious migratory crisis a few years ago,” Rubio told a news channel.

Govt warns iPhone users of phishing scams on lost devices

NEW DELHI, DHNS: People who have lost their Apple iPhones, beware! A host of cybercriminals are targeting such people through a sophisticated phishing campaign to gain control of such devices, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has warned.

An advisory issued by MHA’s National Cybercrime Threat Analytics Unit (NCTAU) has said that perpetrators are impersonating Apple Support and exploiting victims’ urgency to locate or secure their missing devices through fraudulent SMSes containing phishing links.

It said the fraudulent messages closely resemble “Find My Phone” or Apple Support notifications and redirect users to counterfeit login pages designed to steal their Apple ID credentials and OTPs in a bid to gain access to the devices.

The messages claim that the lost device has been temporarily switched off, or that urgent action is required to erase data, it said. People have been advised not to click on links received via SMS, especially from international SMS Headers.

Apex court redefines ‘unchastity’ through lens of dignity and privacy

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court has held that the concept of “unchastity” under criminal law must be interpreted in line with modern constitutional values rather than outdated patriarchal notions of morality, in a significant judgment emphasising women’s dignity, privacy and sexual autonomy.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N Kotiswar Singh made the observation recently while upholding the conviction of a man under Part II of Section 506 of the Indian Penal Code.

The appellant, Vijayakumar, had threatened to upload a private video of his former partner bathing naked on Facebook, which the court ruled amounted to imputing unchastity to a woman.

“The act of video-recording the victim in a naked state while she was taking a bath and the threat to upload it on digital social media can be construed to be an act amounting to a threat to impute unchastity within the meaning of Part II of Section 506 IPC,” the bench said.

The court noted that a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy while disrobing in a bathroom, and any threat to publish such images would violate her privacy, dignity and sexual autonomy.

“Such a video... would amount to transgressing her sexual autonomy, undermining her dignity, invading her cherished privacy, and insulting her sexual character,” the bench said.

The 78-page judgment stressed that “unchastity” can no longer be viewed through

traditional patriarchal morality. Instead, it must be understood from the standpoint of a woman’s dignity and autonomy under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The case arose out of a 2015 complaint at the All Women Police Station in Gingee, Tamil Nadu. The woman alleged that she was in a two-year relationship with the accused, who secretly recorded her while she was bathing. After their relationship soured, he allegedly threatened to upload the video on Facebook.

The trial court at Villupuram acquitted him of rape and other charges but convicted him under Section 506 Part II IPC for criminal intimidation.

The Madras High Court on February 28, 2024 upheld the conviction, prompting an appeal in the Supreme Court.

Rajnath signals bigger private role in defence output

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
SHIRDI (AHILYANAGAR), DHNS

Signalling a major shift in India’s defence manufacturing strategy, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said the private sector is no longer merely a supplier of “nuts and bolts” to the armed forces, but has evolved into an innovator and producer of advanced weapon systems, as the government seeks to transform India into a global hub for munitions and automated warfare systems.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the state-of-the-art defence and aerospace innovation and production facilities of Nibe Limited in Shirdi, Singh said the Centre aims to increase private sector participation in

defence manufacturing from the current 25-30% to nearly 50% in the coming years.

“Our government is continuously emphasising that

Make in India should be promoted in critical technologies and advanced systems. To ensure India emerges as a frontrunner in munitions and automated systems, the government is ready to take every necessary step,”

Singh said. Lauding the role of Indian industry, he said the country’s private sector had developed a strong understanding of future warfare technologies and was increasingly contributing to next-generation defence capabilities.

“Self-reliant India means a secure India,” the minister said.



Rajnath Singh

Govt shifted fuel price burden to people: Cong

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Congress on Saturday accused the Modi government of failing to pass on the benefits of falling global oil prices since 2014 and instead burdening the common man as crude prices rise amid the West Asia crisis.

The party also alleged that the government “compromised” sovereignty by letting India’s dependence on crude and gas imports from West Asia rise rapidly while questioning the “deception” of announcing the hike after the elections.

Addressing a press conference, Congress Research Department chairman Rajeev Gowda asked why the government did not pass on the gains from lower oil prices after 2014 and instead allowed private firms to corner the profits.

“Why did it raise its own



Plastic containers lined up at a petrol pump as villagers queue up to buy fuel in Gujarat’s Halvad. REUTERS

fuel taxes rather than let consumers benefit? Does the government not have a moral and economic obligation to control inflation rather than contribute to it now?” he asked, claiming that the Centre collected Rs 25,000 crore through windfall profits in 2022-23 even as private refiners continued to benefit

from export margins.

Gowda alleged that while Modi addressed Parliament on the West Asia crisis, he sought to downplay the seriousness of the conflict instead of presenting an honest assessment.

He said the impact of rising oil prices on the common man will be “devastating” because they have sharply increased transportation costs, directly raising the prices of essential goods across the country.

No shortage: IOC

Indian Oil Corporation, the nation’s largest oil firm, said there was no overall shortage of petrol and diesel in the country and described fuel outages reported at some retail outlets as “highly localised” and temporary, caused by regional demand-supply mismatches and shifting sales patterns.

(With PTI inputs)

POLITICAL SURVIVAL

Growth-focused agenda is likely to outlive his premiership

Starmerism may survive even if Starmer is forced out as PM

BLOOMBERG

Britain's ruling Labour Party, in its infinite wisdom, may choose to remove Keir Starmer from the position he won in a landslide election less than two years ago. But Starmerism will probably survive him. For all the criticism thrown at the prime minister, he did have a guiding mission: a direct, pragmatic and progressive attempt to fix the UK's most pressing problems, especially its inability to foster economic growth.

His project was simple: run public services competently; cut immigration to politically tolerable levels; reform utilities, particularly if corporate owners mishandle them; increase workers' rights and broaden opportunity; and push housebuilding and productivity through careful deregulation.

And even if his premiership fails, Starmerism has not. Britain was the G7's fastest-growing economy in the last quarter. Bond markets have rebelled only at the prospect of Starmer's ousting. Waiting times in the National Health Service have shrunk, and net migration is down to defensible numbers. New laws address some long-standing complaints from renters and workers.

For growth to genuinely take root in Britain, however, this programme of government will have to evolve beyond its



Potential challengers to Keir Starmer

Keir Starmer became Labour leader in 2020 and Prime Minister in 2024, but his leadership is now under pressure after the party's poor local election results triggered speculation over possible challengers.

WES STREETING

The most organised challenger so far. He has support from MPs and is openly preparing for a leadership contest



Possible successors



Andy Burnham
He has support from Labour members and parts of the soft left



Angela Rayner
A soft-left alternative who remains influential within Labour



Ed Miliband
A possible unity or soft-left candidate

(Starmer has refused to set a timeline for his exit and may yet overcome the crisis plaguing the Labour Party)

Labour Leader Selection Process

- Leader challenged or resigns
- Labour MPs enter race (Need support from 20% of MPs)
- Party members vote (Ranked-choice system)
- Winner becomes Labour leader

progenitor — and beyond the red lines he set for himself, explicitly or otherwise.

No. 10's efforts to generate growth have constantly crashed into these self-imposed limits. Some, such as Starmer's determination not to reopen Brexit wounds by seeking a return to the EU's customs union, are already being discussed by his colleagues. But they are all serious constraints on any prime minister's ability to deliver what Labour voters expect.

He also promised not to hike income tax, National Insurance or sales tax. But the government has run out of money and does not know how to raise much more. At the back of Starmer's mind is a UK tax-to-GDP ratio that is heading

towards a postwar high of 38%, according to the Office for Budget Responsibility's March forecast. A bolder leader might yet be willing to cross this Rubicon — if they feel confident in their ability to convince the British people that past promises were made in a different and less difficult world.

Starmer's reticence has also limited how far he has confronted his own lawmakers. When clumsy attempts to cut the country's bloated welfare bill were opposed by members of Parliament, the government made several humiliating U-turns that cost it both momentum and authority. Left-wingers hate Starmer for purging them from Labour; in reality, he was so

solicitous of their concerns that he weakened his own project. And on regulatory reform, as others have argued, his agenda is a cause in need of a theory. Starmer has correctly identified the multiple blockers to growth — namely the vast array of quangos, bureaucrats and other state-employed busybodies holding back essential activities such as homebuilding. But his party and government are too divided on how to stop them.

Arguably, Labour's mandate extends to making deep changes to how the UK's administrative state functions, so it will have to be bolder. Whoever leads must decide whether they were called in to unclog a few pipes or rebuild the plumbing. Starmer has stressed "deliv-

ery", thinking — like former US President Joe Biden before him — that it is the only way to keep the populists at bay. But if the prime minister had designed his agenda as a political project, and not just a managerial one, he might have had better results.

Any successor — or Starmer himself, if he survives — will face unchanged constraints and the same problems. And they will come to a similar conclusion on the way forward, since the essential components of a pragmatic, progressive agenda will not change. What will have to give are his myriad red lines. The government will need more radical approaches to raising money. For one, it will have to reopen the debate on how capital gains on real estate in London and the Southeast, where so much national wealth is locked up for private gain, will be taxed. It will have to find the strength to face down critics from both the left and the populist right if the welfare bill is ever to be contained. And local authorities cannot be allowed to keep blocking housebuilding.

Can any of Starmer's challengers credibly promise to re-examine these constraints? Can they present something that differs from Starmerism in substance, and not just in presentation? They probably cannot. But they do not need to in order to win. For that task, they face a smaller constituency than the country as a whole.

WORLD AT A GLANCE



Lhakpa Sherpa, who has climbed Mount Everest 11 times and holds the record for the most summits by a woman, waves upon her arrival in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Saturday. REUTERS

Indian peacekeeping officer wins UN Gender Advocate award

► Indian peacekeeper Abhilasha Barak, serving with the UN mission in Lebanon, has been named the recipient of a prestigious military gender advocate award by the world body, PTI reports from United Nations.

Major Barak has been honoured with the 2025 United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award for her outreach efforts with women and girls during her deployment in the West Asian nation. "Proud to announce that Major Abhilasha Barak has been awarded the 2025 UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award. She is being recognised for her outreach and community engage-

ment activities for women and adolescent girls, as well as gender-sensitisation training for peacekeepers," the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations said in a post on X on Friday. Barak is serving with the Indian Battalion as commander of the Female Engagement Team (FET) in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). She is also the first woman combat helicopter pilot in the Indian Army.

She will be honoured at the UN headquarters when the world body commemorates the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, observed annually on May 29.

Chemical evacuation orders in US

► About 40,000 people were under evacuation orders and schools were shut on Friday in California after a storage tank continued to leak a hazardous chemical used in the manufacture of plastic parts, AP/PTI reports from Garden Grove (California). Officials warned that the tank could rupture or explode.

A storage tank holding between 22,700 and 26,500 litres of methyl methacrylate

overheated on Thursday and began venting vapours into the air at an aerospace plastics facility in Garden Grove, a city in Orange County. Officials ordered residents in Garden Grove to evacuate and expanded the evacuation orders on Friday to some residents in five other Orange County cities after crews were unable to stop the overnight leak from the tank at GKN Aerospace.



Smoke rises as fire hits a poor coastal community in Manila, the Philippines, on Saturday. AP/PTI

SU DO KU X - 3925

1					9				
5	7								
				2	8				9
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9	2	6	1	8	7	3	4	5	
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4	8	7	3	5	6	2	1	9	
2	9	3	5	7	1	4	6	8	
5	1	8	4	6	3	9	2	7	
6	7	4	8	9	2	5	3	1	
8	6	9	7	3	4	1	5	2	
7	4	2	9	1	5	6	8	3	
3	5	1	6	2	8	7	9	4	

SOLUTION TO 3924

To solve the puzzle:
The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

82 killed in China coal mine blast

More than 200 miners rescued after gas explosion in Shanxi province

BEIJING, AFP

A gas explosion at a coal mine in northern China has killed at least 82 people, authorities reported on Saturday, revising an earlier death toll as they said preliminary findings showed the company involved had committed "serious" violations.

The blast marked the country's biggest mining disaster in 17 years, with search efforts underway to find two people still missing late on Saturday evening, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

A total of 247 workers were underground at the time of the blast, which occurred at 7:29 pm (1129 GMT) on Friday at the Liushenyu coal mine in Shanxi, according to



Rescue team members and emergency vehicles arrive at the Liushenyu coal mine in Changzhi on Saturday. AFP

state news agency Xinhua. Of those, 128 people were sent to hospital for treatment, CCTV said. Chinese authorities said late on Saturday that preliminary findings showed the coal mine company had committed "serious illegal violations", state media reported.

"Preliminary judgment indicates that the coal mine enterprise involved committed serious illegal violations," authorities said at a press conference broadcast on CCTV.

A total of 755 emergency and medical personnel were

dispatched to the site, with rescue efforts still ongoing on Saturday afternoon, CCTV said. Friday's explosion was the deadliest mining disaster in China since 2009, when 108 people were killed in a mine blast in northeast Heilongjiang province.

President Xi Jinping urged "all-out efforts" to treat the injured and called for a thorough investigation into the incident, according to Xinhua.

The government said it has launched an "uncompromising" probe.

Protest against Spain PM erupts in clashes

MADRID, REUTERS

At least seven police officers were injured in clashes with protesters, officials said, as tens of thousands of people marched through Madrid on Saturday demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez after a series of corruption scandals.

A small group of protesters tried to break through barriers around Sanchez's residence during the rally, which was otherwise largely peaceful. Police detained a group of masked individuals on the main road leading to Moncloa Palace, where the Socialist leader lives with his family, images broadcast on Spanish television showed. Three people were arrested.

Demonstrators carried banners reading "Resignation of the socialist mafia" and other slogans, alongside scores of red and gold national flags during the "March for Dignity", organised by the Spanish Civil Society association. Leaders from the oppo-



Teachers, pupils and families demonstrate during an indefinite strike in the province of Valencia on Saturday. REUTERS

sition People's Party and the far-right Vox also took part.

A Spanish court announced on Tuesday that former Spanish Socialist prime minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero was being investigated for leading an influence-peddling and money-laundering network, in another blow to the leftist government. Zapatero, a key ally of the prime minister, denied any wrongdoing.

Sanchez briefly considered resigning in April 2024 after a judge opened an investigation into his wife, Begona Gomez.

Singapore recommends adults to test for HIV once in lifetime

SINGAPORE, PTI: Singapore on Saturday recommended that every adult aged 21 and above be tested for HIV at least once in their lifetime following a rise in infections.

In 2025, 166 new cases of HIV were reported among Singapore citizens and per-

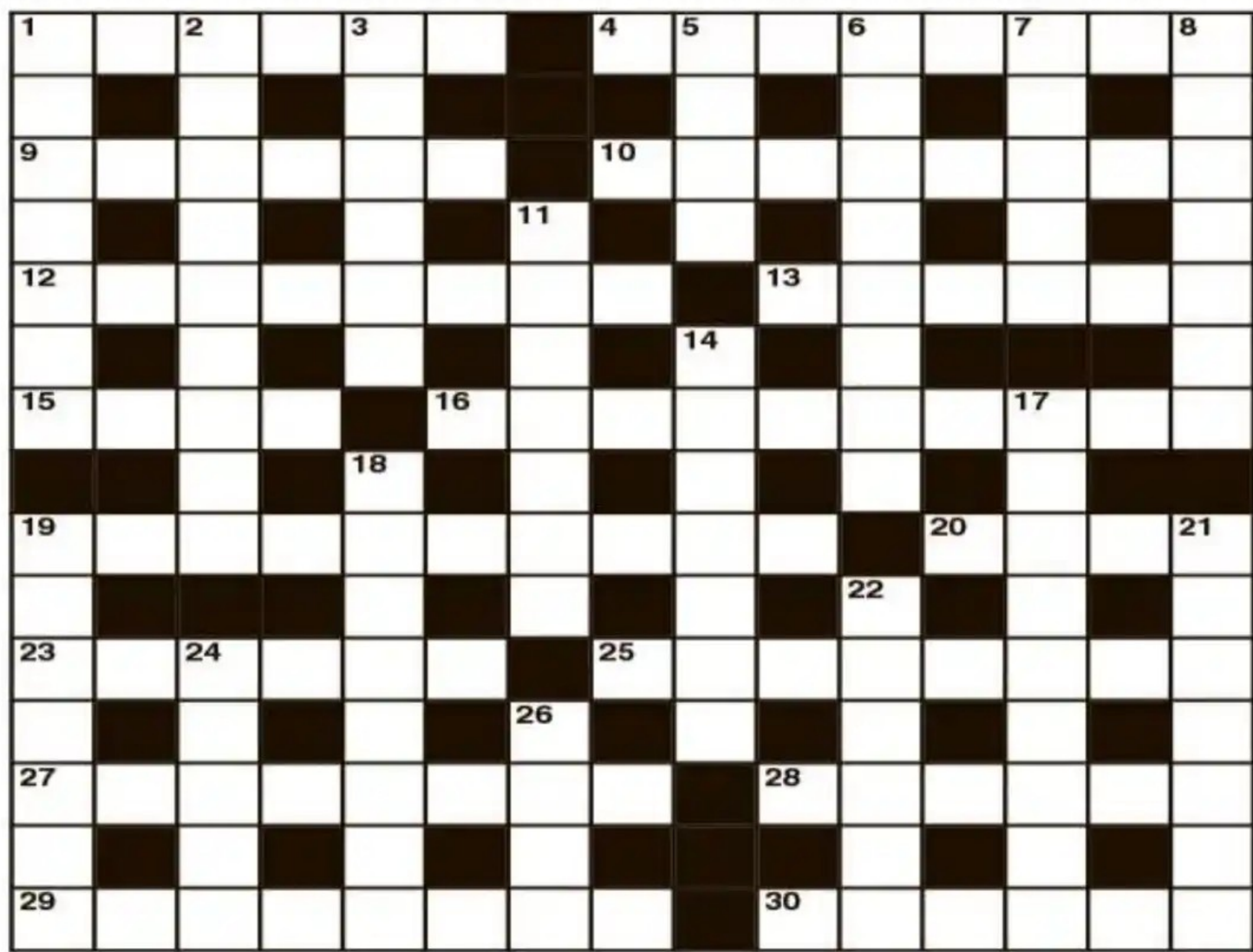
manent residents, with an incidence rate of 3.9 infections per 1,00,000 residents. This brings the total number of Singapore residents known to be living with HIV to 7,248 as of the end of 2025, with a prevalence rate of 172 infections per 1,00,000 residents, according

to a release issued by the Communicable Diseases Agency.

"Individuals who engage in at-risk sexual behaviours should go for regular HIV testing every three to six months. HIV self-testing is a quick and convenient way to check one's HIV status," the agency said.

The CDA said the annual number of new cases has gradually declined over the years, ranging from 300 to 500 cases between 2009 and 2019, 200 to 270 cases between 2020 and 2023, and fewer than 200 cases annually since 2024.

◆ SUNDAY CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 2681 ◆



ACROSS

- 1 Change for the better (6)
- 4 US federal legislature (8)
- 9 Destructive swarming insect (6)
- 10 Wrong-headed (8)
- 12 Intermittently (3,3,2)
- 13 Prestigious characteristic (6)
- 15 Adroitness in handling people (4)
- 16 Suffer financial setback (5,1,4)
- 19 Lose an opportunity (4,3,3)
- 20 Tolerate (4)
- 23 Secret (6)
- 25 Impartial (8)
- 27 Forcibly expressive (8)
- 28 Very small (6)
- 29 Hot and bothered (8)
- 30 A way out (6)

DOWN

- 1 Exclude as possibility (4,3)
- 2 Recognise the truth (4,5)
- 3 Insurrection (6)
- 5 Left remaining (4)
- 6 Inadvertent revelation (8)
- 7 Soil (5)
- 8 Made by exploited labour (7)
- 11 A very long time (3,4)
- 14 Defendant (7)
- 17 A welcome for all visitors (4,5)
- 18 US Strategic Defence Initiative (4,4)
- 19 Shakespearean regicide (7)
- 21 Compensation (7)
- 22 Audacious (6)
- 24 Venomous snake (5)
- 26 Monetary penalty (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 4041

CRYPTIC

ACROSS: 8, Port-ray 9, Brought up 13, Light 14, Ch-Ina 15, Bristle 16, Catch-up 17, Sup-ER 18, Stood 20, SI-tes (rev) 22, Relat-E 23, Cot-ton 25, Pro-test 27, Free-sia 30, C-Ray-on 31, Fell-O-W 32, Ne-E-ds 35, TR-out 36, Ridge (Di Reg) 37, No-table 39, Ad-dress 41, Rot-or 42, TR-ace 43, Get-a-round 44, How-ling.

DOWN:

1, S-ought 2, Stitches 3, Catch phrase 4, Great pity 5, Numbers 6, Chain store 7, Butt (but) 10, Slacks 11, RIS-sole 12, Lead on 19, Outside (chance) 21, To-rnad-o 24, Drawing-room 26, Took the rap 28, Dead wrong 29, Alberta 30, Cat-nap 32, Not at all 33, Swe-dE-n (rev) 34, Pre-ss on 38, B-rainy 40, Deed (rev).

EASY

ACROSS: 8, Panache 9, Bighheaded 13, Haste 14, Enter 15, Panther 16, Immense 17, Elope 18, Nylon 20, Eland 22, Limpid 23, Gantry 25, Agitate 27, Cholera 30, Baltic 31, Author 32, Sults 35, Cacti 36, Reeks 37, Whiz kid 39, Polygon 41, Scent 42, Admit 43, Spearhead 44, Gallant.

DOWN:

1, Balsam 2, Careened 3, Cheesecloth 4, Cirrhosis 5, Chipper 6, Cannonball 7, Mesh 10, Shrine 11, Streams 12, Brandy 19, Literal 21, Angelic 24, Wherewithal 26, Trillingual 28, Superstar 29, Chasten 30, Biceps 32, Suitable 33, Sedate 34, Crunchy 38, Kimono 40, Lope.



NATIONAL SEEDS CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of India Undertaking)
Regional Office : Bangalore - 24, (CIN No. : U 74899 DL 1963 GOI 003913)
Phone : 080-2341 5816. E-mail : rm.bangalore@indiaseeds.com,
nsbangalore.mktg@gmail.com Website : www.indiaseeds.com
No. : 7(4)/Tender/Mktg/NSC-BNG/2026-27 Date : 23-05-2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)
National Seeds Corporation Limited, Regional Office, Bangalore invites NIT through Online for Purchase of Certified Seeds of Groundnut and Truthfully Labelled Seeds of Green Manure from reputed Seed Producers. For further details visit our Website : www.indiaseeds.com. NIT Document can be Downloaded from Website : <https://indiaseeds.enivida.com> from 24-05-2026, 13.00 hrs. Last Date for Submission of Online Tender is 27-05-2026 till 14.00 hrs.
Sd/- Regional Manager,
National Seeds Corporation, Bangalore.

Govt of Karnataka

Office of Deputy Conservator of Forests
Social Forestry Division, Chitradurga
Ph No: 08194-220130 E-mail: dcfsfcta@gmail.com
Tender Notification No:CTD.DVN.RKVY.SF.TENDER.
CR/01/2025-26 Dated: 21-05-2026

3rd E-Tender Notification
[Through KPPP Portal]
Tender Notifications For the financial year 2026-27Chitradurga Social Forestry Division and its under 06 Range offices regthe carrying out of Forestry works under various schemes, which are not success in 1st and 2nd call works for166.693 Lakhs from date: 25-05-2026 to 01-06-2026 has been published. The last date to apply for tender is- 01-06-2026 evening 4:00 pm for more information visit www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in.
RO.No.118:DIPR/ Sd/- Assistant Conservator of Forests
CTA/KSMCA/ And Technical Assistant Social Forestry
2026-27 Division, Chitradurga

POTTING IT RIGHT India have lessons to learn from the Red Dragon in cracking the pro code

Chinese era in PRO SNOOKER



Wu Yize

SIDNEY KIRAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

In May 2025, Zhao Xintong did the unthinkable. Returning to professional snooker in January following a 20-month ban for being involved in match-fixing, China's Zhao pulled off one of the greatest miracles in the history of professional snooker by lifting the coveted World Championships after entering the draw as a qualifier. Once the bastion of English players who ruled The Crucible with an iron fist for a century, "The Cyclone" Zhao dismantled living legend Ronnie O'Sullivan 17-7 in the semifinal before sweeping aside another great Mark Williams 18-12 in the title clash to become the first Asian to lay his hands on the coveted trophy.

With the glass ceiling shattered, it was time for the Chinese,

Zhao Xintong



nese, who barely fail when they set their sights on something, to step on the pedal. This year, a record 11 Chinese entered the main draw of 32, and Wu Yize went on to win the World Championship with one of the mesmerising performances ever seen. Hailed as the next big thing by O'Sullivan himself, the 22-year-old Wu became the second youngest player after the legendary Stephen Hendry to emerge victorious. In a pulsating final against Shaun Murphy, where fortunes swung back and forth, Wu, nicknamed the Priest, showed the calmness of a seasoned monk to script a career-defining era-shifting 18-17 win.

The back-

to-back triumphs by the Chinese cueists are the culmination of a near three-decade-old plan. Just like in India, where snooker parlours are found in every nook and corner of most metros and plenty of youth can be spotted playing, mostly for fun, administrators there initially wanted to change that negative perception. Having seen lots of pro snooker videos from UK, they believed the sport could be a possible profession. The Chinese Billiards Sports Association (CBSA) immediately went about restructuring the game, got in a lot of sponsors, started conducting plenty of tournaments, firstly at the amateur level before migrating to staging rankings events on the professional circuit. Slowly, kids started getting serious about the sport — like seen in Olympic disciplines such as swimming, badminton, shooting, weightlifting, etc., to name a few — but they needed that breakthrough moment that would capture the imagination of the next generation for a niche game.

It arrived in April 2005 at the China Open when then 18-year-old Ding Junhui stunned Hendry to wear the crown. Watched by over 110 million people, Ding instantly became a national hero, and the image of the sport also got a complete makeover. It was no longer viewed negatively. One of the guys watching Ding on TV was an eight-year-old Zhao. Similarly, thousands of kids aspired to play snooker. Aspiration is one thing, but the migration from amateur snooker at home to the gruelling professional world in the United Kingdom is another. It's like walking into a jungle with hardly any ammunition.

Firstly, until then, most of professional snooker events were largely confined to the UK with some in other parts of Europe. While earning a professional ticket is in itself a painstaking process, living and playing in the Old Blighty is no cup of tea, especially for the Chinese who don't speak the language. While now the competition is simplified and players are guaranteed a sum at the end of the season, back then players had to win at least two or three matches to make money. The investments would far outweigh the returns.

But the Chinese believed they could change the world order. Benevolent sponsors pumped in a lot of money, and a good number of ranking events were staged at home. Ding built his own academy in Sheffield — a stone's throw away from The Crucible — where his compatriots stayed and practised on tables and conditions exactly as on the pro tour. Ding's academy was a home away from home for the Chinese, and that nursery has now become the breeding home of champions — present and future.

Compare this with India, where the sport was conceived by the British

circa 1875. While snooker, along with billiards, enjoys good patronage even now and has produced several champions at the amateur level, very few have been able to crack the professional code. Only a handful, like Geet Sethi, Yasin Merchant, Aditya Mehta, Pankaj Advani and Lucky Vatmani tried their hand professionally before opting out for various reasons. Currently, Ishpreet Singh Chadha, a protege of Merchant, is the only Indian on the professional tour.

"It's simple, we prioritise the amateur game while they (Chinese) have made it very, very clear from day one that they prioritise only the professional game," a candid Mehta, who played on the pro tour for a decade, told DHoS. "The amateur game is only a stepping stone for them to move into the big leagues, whereas for us, the amateur game is to effectively be all and end all. So you can say that this is 30 years in the making and 30 years of relentless pursuit of one goal. It's not about any confusion as to what the priorities are. In India, we've never had a goal, except for, you know, winning world titles at the amateur level. This is despite the fact that we have talented cueists."

Mehta, however, defended a cueist's priority to play only amateur snooker. "The moment you turn professional, you are on your own in India. Living and playing in the UK, unless you have sponsors, is no joke. One needs at least Rs 25 lakh a year. The word pro is like a taboo. But when you play and win titles on the amateur circuit, you are guaranteed government funding and jobs. Sports is a profession and we need financial security. So unless sponsors come on board and the mentality changes towards professional snooker, things are going to be bleak in India. We will still be stuck at the amateur level."

BSFI president S Balasubramaniam, who was instrumental in conducting five Indian Open (a professional ranking event) tournaments from 2013 to 2019, said getting sponsors for a non-Olympic sport is extremely challenging. "Firstly, although snooker originated in India, it was billiards that was more loved. In China, plenty of sponsors come on board and are committed to the cause. In India, to get sponsors for snooker is a Herculean task.

"This is the reason why many of our cueists prefer playing on the amateur level. If your ranking is below 50, it's really hard to make money. Most sports in India rely a lot on government funding. But since we are not an Olympic sport, we are not in the top category as far as the government is concerned. Funding works accordingly. However, at the same time, I admit we can't always rely on government funding. We can't say the government is not giving us money; we are not able to progress.

"Corporate sponsorship is not forthcoming for a sport like snooker. People started off with a lot of other leagues like badminton, volleyball, etc, what happened? Nothing sustained. Take even ISL, after the 10-year deal with Reliance ended, they struggled. Imagine if an universally popular sport like football is unable to get sponsorship, then think about a niche one like snooker. There's a lot of scope in pool, however, and we are trying to tap into that. And most of our players are warming up to it." Balasubramaniam offered.

That sums up what the future holds. Professional snooker will still be like climbing Mount Everest for Indians, while for the Chinese, who are at the summit now, it's about creating a new world order.

Gurindervir, Vishal set the track on fire

Decathlete Tejaswin sets new benchmark to qualify for CWG

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

In a historic day for Indian track and field, three national records were broken in men's events of the National Athletics Federation Competition in Ranchi.

Gurindervir Singh (100m), Vishal T K (400m) and Tejaswin Shankar (decathlon) reached new heights in their respective events.

While Gurindervir (clocked 10.09 seconds) and Tejaswin (8057 points) also qualified for the Commonwealth Games with their unprecedented efforts, Vishal became the first Indian to clock a sub-45 timing at 44.98 seconds in the quarter mile event.

Gurindervir, in fact, raised the bar by several notches as the 25-year-old from Punjab improved the previous record of 10.15 (set on Friday by Animesh Kujur) while becoming the second-fastest Asian man this season as he trails Japan's Fukuto Komuro (10.08).

Once the record time flashed on the screen, Gurindervir took off the bib number sheet to reveal the message he wrote before the race: "Task is not finished yet. Wait I am still standing. 10.10!"

The duo also qualified for the Commonwealth Games by breaching AFI's entry standard of 10.16.



Gurindervir Singh became the first Indian sprinter to breach the 10.10-second mark en route to a new national record during the National Athletics Federation Competition. AFI



Vishal TK



Tejaswin Shankar

Vishal's feat
The men's 400m final was a showdown between the two coaching factions of the Athletics Federation of India as Jamaican Jason Dawson-coached Vishal of Tamil Nadu dominated the field while putting a visible gap between him and coach Raj Mohan-trained Rajesh Ramesh (TN), who clocked 45.31 for a second-placed finish.

Vishal improved on his previous NR of 45.12 but missed out on the CWG qualification mark of 44.96.

Tejaswin, meanwhile, became the first Indian to breach the 8000-point barrier, improving on his previous best of 7826 points (set in Poland last year) and also crossing

the CWG's direct qualification mark of 7787.

Results: Men: Gurindervir Singh (Rel) 10.09s (NR: 10.15, Animesh Kujur, 2026) 1; Animesh Kujur (Od) 10.20, 2; Pranav Gurav (Rel) 10.29, 3.

400m: Vishal TK (TN) 44.98, (NR: Old: 45.12, 2025) 1; Rajesh Ramesh (TN) 45.31, 2; Jay Kumar (UP) 45.47, 3.

Decathlon: Tejaswin Shankar (Rel) 8057 points (NR: Old: 7826, 2025) 1; Thowfeeq N (NCOT) 7530, 2; Gokul R (Nav) 7157, 3.

Women: 100m: Sudeshna Shivankar (Mah) 11.56s, 1; Giridharani R (TN) 11.58, 2; Tamanna (Har) 11.62, 3.

400m: Vithya Ramraj (TN) 52.22, 1; Ansa Babu (Pol) 53.07, 2; Prachi (JSW) 53.26, 3.

1500m: Pojja (JSW) 4:11.34, 1; Ankita (UTI) 4:12.28, 2; Anju (Har) 4:21.26, 3.

Pole vault: Baranica Elangovan (TN) 4.10m, 1; Nitika Akare (MP) 4.10, 2; Krishna Rachan (Rai) 3.90, 3.

Triple jump: Niharika Vashisht (Pun) 13.64, 1; Bhairabi Roy (Raj) 13.28, 2; Mallala Anusha (AP) 13.28, 3.

Javelin throw: Shilpa Rani (Har) 56.46, 1; Anni Rani (UP) 55.91, 2; Rashmi K (AP) 54.85, 3.

Shot put: Krishna Jayasankar (Rel) 17.35, 1; Yogita (Har) 16.82, 2; Shiksha (Rel) 16.61, 3.

Adithi, Peeyush emerge winners

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bengaluru Rural's Adithi Sushanth pulled off an upset by beating top seed Keerthi Balaji of Bengaluru Urban 21-18, 21-16 to be crowned champion in the girls' under-17 singles category in the Karnataka State Sub-junior ranking badminton tournament at the Dr BR Ambedkar Indoor Stadium in Vijayapura on Saturday.

In the corresponding boys' final, third seed Peeyush Tripathy defeated Dylan P Thokchom 21-19, 10-21, 21-17 to take home the crown.

Results (all finals, prefix denotes seedings): U-17: Boys singles: 3-Peeyush Tripathy (Bengaluru Urban) bt Dylan P Thokchom (Bengaluru Urban) 21-19, 10-21, 21-17.

Girls singles: Adithi Sushanth (Bengaluru Rural) bt 1-Keerthi Balaji (Bengaluru Urban) 21-18, 21-16.

U-18: Boys singles: Gautham S Nair (Bengaluru Urban) bt 13-Yashvardhan SR (Bengaluru Rural) 21-12, 21-19.

Girls singles: 1-Mahitha Naidu Surisetty (Bengaluru Urban) bt Smriti S (Bengaluru Urban) 21-10, 21-7.

Bangalore Kickers ride high on Beer hat-trick

BENGALURU, DHNS: James Beer netted a hat-trick while Rajghb P R scored a brace as Bangalore Kickers FC trounced Devanahalli FC 7-0 in a Group 7 game in the BDFCA Division League at the Bangalore Football Stadium here on Saturday.

LOCAL FOOTBALL

Results: Group 1: Bangalore Wanderers FC 3 (Sachit 2nd, Sridhar 18th, Archisman 51st) bt Misaka United FC 1 (C Seikhogin Mate 61st); Gouthama FC 1 (Kirtibas Mahto 22nd) bt Indiranagar FC 0.

Group 7: Bangalore Kickers FC 7 (Zicco Rabhi 9th, Rajghb PR 12th, 36th, James Beer 31st, 39th, 40th, Ashwin R 53rd) bt Devanahalli FC 0; Young Dynamos FC 5 (Vivek V 10th, 30th+2 pen, V Navin 46th, Ranjith Selvaraj 55th, 56th) bt Minerva FC 1 (Srihari S 57th).

Group 8: Bangalore Blues FC 6 (Vajush 14th, Andrew 22nd, Umesh 40th, 46th, Konoina 55th, Suraj 53rd own goal) bt Chinnappa Garden FC 1 (Unnat 48th); Rangers FC 7 (Jue Abhishek 8th, Benish 17th, 34th, Naveen 18th, 31st, Shan Sebastian 20th, Akshay 44th) bt Royals FC 0.



K N Tilak Kumar (fifth from left) -- Joint Managing Director, The Printers (Mysore) Private Limited (TPML) -- presented the K N Guruswamy Memorial Trophy to P Arun Kumar (fifth from right), the owner of the winning horse Alfonsine (astride P Trevor, fourth from right) at the BTC on Saturday. BTC Managing Committee members (from left) M C Manjunath Urs, K Shasha Bindu Das, C Mahesh Medappa, L Shivashankar (chairman), Pradeep Annaiah, Shankar Balu and R Manjunath Mahesh were also present on the occasion. DH PHOTO/ B K JANARDHAN

Alfonsine wins K N Guruswamy Memorial Trophy

BENGALURU RESULTS
Pradeep Annaiah-trained Alfonsine, ridden by jockey P Trevor, won the K N Guruswamy Memorial Trophy, the feature event of the day here at the BTC on Saturday.

1. The Royal Turn Plate -- 1200m: Bright Thunder (Manjiri Horse Breeders, Aditya P Thackersey and Rajan Aggarwal) Akshay Kumar 1, Osaka (Suraj Narreddu) 2, On the Rise (Pavan) 3, Spark Of Life (P Trevor) 4. WB: 3/4, 6 1/4, 2, T: 1:15.69. Tote: Rs 33 (w); 2/4, 10 (p); Shp: Rs 29; Thp: Rs 28; Fc: Rs 48; Q: Rs 21; Tri: Rs 130 & 108; Exp: Rs 279 & 119; TB: D Byranji; Fav: Osaka.

2. The Moonlight Romance Plate (Div II) -- 1400m: Femme Fatale (ST Kalappa) P Mani 1, Blue Saint (B L Paswan) 2, Lg's Script (R Vaibhav) 3, Shock And Awe (Darshan) 4. WB: 5 1/4, Hd. Snk. T: 1:29.17. Tote: Rs 465 (w); 73.60, 11(p); Shp: Rs 245; Thp: Rs 50; Fc: Rs 8719; Q: Rs 5386; Tri: Rs 17657 & 7567; Exp: Rs C/F. TB: M R Singh; Fav: Lg's Script.

3. The Superville Plate (Div II) -- 1400m: Quendom (Manjiri Horse Breeders and D R Thacker) Akshay Kumar 1, Lena (P Trevor) 2, Blue Storm (Pavan) 3, Diva (VR Jagadeesh) 4. WB: Nk, 1 1/2, 6 3/4, T: 1:27.33. Tote: Rs 27 (w) 11, 10, 15 (p); Shp: Rs 33; Thp: Rs 30; Fc: Rs 58; Q: Rs 21; Tri: Rs 158 & 88; Exp: Rs 1825 & 1825. TB: S S Attaollahi; Fav: Lena.

4. The K N Guruswamy Memorial Trophy -- 1400m: Alfonsine (P Arun Kumar) P Trevor 1, Sassy Sarah (Mukesh Kumar) 2, Moon Star (Suraj Narreddu) 3, Thrill Of Brazil (VR Jagadeesh) 4. WB: 5 1/2, 7, 3, T: 1:25.33. Tote: Rs 16 (w) 10, 39, 15 (p); Shp: Rs 124; Thp: Rs 32; Fc: Rs 286; Q: Rs 178; Tri: Rs 754 & 225; Exp: Rs 7509 & 5632. TB: Pradeep Annaiah; Fav: Alfonsine.

5. The Col Desraj Urs Trophy -- 1600m: Margaretta (M H Deboo) Vivek G 1, Ice Of Fire (Ashadh Asbar) 2, Prokofiev (P Trevor) 3, Inspire S Antony Raij 4. WB: 4 1/4, 1, 3, T: 1:38.47. Tote: Rs 37 (w); 11, 11, 10 (p); Shp: Rs 29; Thp: Rs 43; Fc: Rs 153; Q: Rs 79; Tri: Rs 145 & 55; Exp: Rs 434 & 323. TB: P Shroff; Fav: Prokofiev.

6. The Moonlight Romance Plate (Div I) -- 1400m: Razzmatazz (Sarinaga Racing Pvt Ltd) Aditya Waydande 1, CR Seven (Rajesh Kumar) 2, Versace (Indeerjeet Kumar) 3, Dr Colchester (VR Jagadeesh) 4. WB: 1, 3, 4 1/4, T: 1:28.55. Tote: Rs 28 (w) 10, 10, 14 (p); Shp: Rs 36; Thp: Rs 38; Fc: Rs 180; Q: Rs 69; Tri: Rs 425 & 131; Exp: Rs 1267 & 671. TB: CR Seven; Fav: Rajesh Narreddu.

7. The Superville Plate (Div I) -- 1400m: Mister Brown (Santosh G) N Arind Kumar 1, Flight Of Fancy (Aditya Waydande 2, Supreme Success (Suraj Narreddu) 3, Stravinsky (Rajesh Kumar) 4. WB: Nk, 4 1/2, 2 1/4, T: 1:27.71. Tote: Rs 27 (w) 12, 16, 14 (p); Shp: Rs 35; Thp: Rs 41; Fc: Rs 105; Q: Rs 40; Tri: Rs 249 & 139; Exp: Rs 2934 & 1706. TB: Pradeep Annaiah; Fav: Mister Brown.

Jackpot: Rs 6,425 & 174.

Mini jackpot: Rs 2244.

1 treble: Rs 5029. **11 treble:** Rs 1382.

Bagan's national team players to miss Unity Cup

BENGALURU, DHNS: Mohun Bagan Super Giants players are unlikely to feature in the Unity Cup, making the likes of Manvir Singh, Liston Colaco, Suhail Ahmad Bhat, Anirudh Thapa, Sahal Abdul Samad, Vishal Kaith unavailable for the knockout tournament in

London from May 26 to 30, reports Aditya K Halder.

The abovementioned names, most of whom are a crucial part of the Indian lineup, have already been called back. The exclusion weakened the national team's chances at the four-nation tournament,

which includes Jamaica, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

Speaking to *DH*, the club on its part maintained that they had no objection to its players joining the squad but would only allow them to do so during FIFA's international-match window.

HC: Vinesh to participate in Asiad trials

NEW DELHI, PTI

The Delhi High Court has given its nod to the participation of celebrated grappler Vinesh Phogat in the upcoming trials for the Asian Games, saying the Wrestling Federation of India's (WFI) selection policy is exclusionary for the lack of discretion to consider an iconic player like her, who is returning from a maternity break.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia ordered that the selection trials, to be held on May 30-31, shall be video-recorded by the WFI and an independent observer from the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) each shall also remain present.

"The appellants shall be permitted to participate in the selection trials for the Asian Games,



Vinesh Phogat

2026, which are scheduled for 30.05.2026 and 31.05.2026," the court said in its order passed on May 22 and uploaded on its website on Saturday.

"The policy and the circular are clearly exclusionary in nature as it does not give any discretion to Respondent No.1 (WFI) to consider iconic players like the appellant in view of the sabbatical taken on account of her maternity leave," it stated.

The court further observed that the grounds taken in the show-cause notice "appear to be pre-mediated and reopening the closed issues" and that "it is necessary that the appellant is permitted to participate in the selection trials in the interest of the sport and justice".

The court passed the order on Phogat's appeal against the May 18 order of a single-judge bench, refusing her immediate relief on the issue of her participation in the selection trials.



10 TEAMS 13 VENUES 58 DAYS 74 MATCHES

“Coming back from the T20 WC, Bumrah had a slight niggle which he played with through the WC. When you’re going through something like that, you lose a bit of sharpness.”

MAHELA JAYAWARDENE, MI HEAD COACH



Varun Chakravarthy

KKR take on DC amid fading playoffs hopes

KOLKATA, PTI: Kolkata Knight Riders would look for nothing less than a win when they square off in the season’s final league match of the IPL here on Sunday.

LIVE 7:30 PM

A win, however, may not be enough as KKR’s net run-rate is way inferior to Punjab Kings who reached 15 points after their win over LSG on Saturday.

To move past PBKS, they will need to beat DC by 77 runs if they set a 200-run target or chase down around 180 in 12.1 overs.

As things stand, sixth-placed KKR are still mathematically alive in the race for the last available berth in the playoffs while eighth-placed DC, who will be playing for pride, were knocked out after Shreyas Iyer-led Punjab beat an already-eliminated Lucknow Super Giants by seven wickets.

The PBKS victory officially closed the door on Delhi’s chances as they can only reach up to a maximum of 14 points with a win over the Knight Riders.

Both KKR and PBKS will be out if Rajasthan Royals win the first match of a double header on Sunday against Mumbai Indians.

No Raghuvanshi
The hosts will be without their leading run-scorer Angkrish Raghuvanshi, who has amassed 422 runs.

Shreyas keeps PBKS afloat

Skipper's maiden IPL century lifts tourists to fourth place after 7-wkt win over LSG

LUCKNOW, PTI

Punjab Kings rediscovered their winning touch after six defeats in a row through skipper Shreyas Iyer’s majestic unbeaten 101 as they handed Lucknow Super Giants a seven-wicket towelling to stay alive in the IPL playoffs race here on Saturday.

Shreyas, whose maiden IPL hundred came off 51 balls, and Prabhsimran Singh (69, 39 balls) added 140 runs for the third wicket as Punjab scaled down LSG’s 196 for two in 18 overs. PBKS made 200 for three.

The victory helped Punjab to reach 15 points from their all 14 league engagements to reclaim the No. 4 position on the table.

But now, they will have to go through an excruciating wait to know their fate as Rajasthan Royals (14) are taking on Mumbai Indians on Sunday at Mumbai.

If RR win the match then, Punjab will enter the playoffs as the fourth placed team.

The Kolkata Knight Riders (13 points), who are up against Delhi Capitals in the weekend’s second clash, too have an out-



Skipper Shreyas Iyer scored an unbeaten 101 to help Punjab Kings beat Lucknow Super Giants by seven wickets at the Ekana Cricket Stadium on Saturday. REUTERS

side chance should RR fail to go past MI.

In that case, it will be a battle of net run rate between KKR and PBKS, with both tied on 15 points. Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Sunrisers Hyderabad

and Gujarat Titans are already in the knockouts.

But the equation worries are for another time, as Shreyas showed his steely nerves while chasing yet again with a fabulous knock.

Opener Priyansh Arya fell to a first-ball duck to Mohammad Shami (2/45) and the veteran India pacer uprooted Cooper Connolly’s off-stump as PBKS plunged into turmoil.

But Shreyas was least bothered about those early impediments, and as expected, lorded over spinners and pacers alike with drives, pulls and those trademark flicks off pads.

He was severe on spinners Digvesh Rathee, scorching him for a flurry of onside boundaries.

SCORE BOARD
LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS: Josh Inglis c Shreyas b Shashank 72, Arshin Kulkarni c Prabhsimran b Omarzai 0, Nicholas Pooran b Jansen 2, Ayush Badoni st Prabhsimran b Chahal 43, Rishabh Pant c Jansen b Chahal 26, Abdul Samad (not out) 37, Mukul Choudhary c Dubey b Jansen 1, Arjun Tendulkar (not out) 5, Extras (LB-2 W-8) 10. **TOTAL (for 6 wkts, 20 overs) 196.**
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-20, 3-69, 4-134, 5-169, 6-172.
Bowling: Arshdeep Singh 3-0-52-0, Azmatullah Omarzai 3-0-29-1, Marco Jansen 4-0-33-2, Yuzvendra Cha-

Biryukov holds nerve to clinch title

HITA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Petr Bar Biryukov has known and seen enough of Ilya Ivashka to understand that anything slightly less than his best means risking going on the back foot on the court.

During their final encounter at the SM Krishna Memorial, Biryukov appeared well prepared as the Russian served big, ran wild and mostly returned well while fearlessly facing Ivashka’s solid game head on. Despite falling short on the total points won statistically (49%), clutch saves and control during long rallies made the difference for Biryukov in his 7-6 (0), 4-6, 6-4 victory which helped him clinch the second ATP 50 Challenger here.

With both players successfully holding their serves, the first set went into a tie-breaker. Ivashka, a former top-40 player, gave away free points and fourth-seeded Biryukov capitalised on the opportunity

to race away to a 7-0 lead and claim the opener.

The second set began with Ivashka not appearing in a good mood. But the 32-year-old fuelled his emotion in the right direction by packing an extra punch into his groundstrokes and winning a break in the fifth game to go up 3-2. Deploying high balls, deep hits and body serves, Ivashka began dictating play to grab the second set and force a decider.

Biryukov, who looked physically drained mid-match, pulled himself together in the third set.

Back to his attacking best, the 24-year-old’s swift response troubled Ivashka even though the latter did well to guard his service games until the 10th game. At match point down, Ivashka’s easy backhand put-away found the net, giving Biryukov the game, set, match and his maiden singles title.

“I have no words because I’m so happy,” said the world



Petr Bar Biryukov (right) and Ilya Ivashka pose with their spoils at the SM Krishna Memorial Open. KSLTA MEDIA

No. 335 Biryukov who is set to jump to 268 on Monday. “The tournament was so tough because I played both singles and doubles. This was my eighth match (singles final) of the tournament, so it was very hard. When I was playing the second set, I thought I would die, but I somehow managed to keep going and keep pushing in the third set.”

Biryukov was back again on court a few minutes later

to play the doubles final with partner Grigoriy Lomakin of Kazakhstan. But a second title for the 6-foot-5-inch player wasn’t to be as Indians Adil Kalyanpur and Mukund Sasikumar scored a (3) 6-7, 6-4, 10-3 win to give the hosts the trophy. **Results:** Final (prefix denotes seedings): Singles: 4-Petr Bar Biryukov bt Ilya Ivashka 7-6 (0), 4-6, 6-4. **Doubles:** Adil Kalyanpur/ Mukund Sasikumar (Ind) bt Biryukov/ Grigoriy Lomakin (Kaz) (3) 6-7, 6-4, 10-3.

Praggu holds Giri; Keymer wins title

BUCHAREST, PTI

Grandmaster R Pragganandhaa ended his campaign with an easy draw against Anish Giri while Vincent Keymer (in pic) crushed Jordan Van Foreest to clinch the Super Chess Classic title here on Saturday.

Getting into the final round in joint lead with Fabiano Caruana of United States on five points, Keymer had an excellent chance to annex the crown if he wins against Dutchman Foreest.

Keymer ended the tournament on six points from four victories, four draws and a lone loss against

Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan. Caruana finished second after a draw with Vachier-Lagrave finishing with a tally of 5.5 points.

Wesley So of the US played an easy draw with Sindarov in the finale to end joint third with the Uzbek on five points and it was a five-way tie thereafter with Pragganandhaa, Giri, Foreest, Vachier-Lagrave and Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania ending on an identical 4.5 points.

Results (final round): Vincent Keymer (Ger, 6) bt Jordan Van Foreest (Ned, 4.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 4.5) drew with R Pragganandhaa (Ind, 4.5); Wesley So (Usa, 5) drew with Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 5); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 4.5) drew with Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 5.5); Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rou, 4.5) got a walkover Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 1).



Russell clinches sprint race

MONTREAL, AFP: Pre-season title favourite George Russell delivered a consummate lights-to-flag drive to win Saturday’s sprint race at the Canadian Grand Prix and trim his angry team-mate Kimi Antonelli’s championship lead.

The 28-year-old Briton came home 1.272 seconds clear of world champion Lando Norris of McLaren after resisting a spirited attack by the teenage Italian, who finished third, in the early part of the 23-lap race.

Norris’s McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri came home fourth ahead of both Ferraris with Charles Leclerc finishing fifth ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton.

Four-time champion Max Verstappen finished seventh for Red Bull ahead of Racing Bulls rookie Arvid Lindblad.

It was the first sprint race held at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve and was a memorable one, with the scrap between Russell and Antonelli requiring an intervention from Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff, telling the precocious Italian to cool off and stop talking on the team radio.

The incident came on lap six when Antonelli, 19, tried a move around the outside of Turn One, but Russell defended stoutly forcing the Italian to run off with a muscular defence of his leading position.



George Russell

Can anyone stop Sinner?

PARIS, REUTERS

With defending champion Carlos Alcaraz out injured and Novak Djokovic undercooked on clay, the big question heading into the French Open is can anyone stop Jannik Sinner from securing the career Grand Slam in Paris?

Sinner’s season began to build momentum through a “Sunshine Double” of titles at Indian Wells and Miami before the Italian took complete control of the European clay swing with triumphs in Monte Carlo, Madrid and Rome.

The 24-year-old Italian has a golden opportunity to capture the only major title missing from his collection 12 months after a heartbreaking loss to Alcaraz in the final.

Central to Sinner’s rise has been his growing authority on the sport’s slowest surface.

Victory at Roland Garros would bring Sinner a fifth major and complete the set a few months after Alcaraz did so at the Australian Open.

With Alcaraz skipping his Paris title defence due to a wrist injury, Djokovic looms as one of the few with the game to test Sinner.

The Serb will resume his hunt for a record 25th Grand Slam title having shown in Melbourne that he remains a force even in his late thirties, after dismantling Sinner in a five-set semifinal.



Coming on the back of three successive clay-court titles, Italy’s Jannik Sinner is favourite to win the French Open men’s title. AFP

LIVE 2:30 PM, SONY SPORTS

Yet that display of endurance and mental strength comes with a note of caution.

The physical toll from a two-decade career has left him short of full fitness and his only claycourt outing this season ended in defeat by Dino Prizmic in Rome. Among the other hopefuls, Alexander Zverev remains a contender as he eyes an elusive first major title but the German goes to Paris with

question marks over his fitness due to a back issue.

Twice runner-up Casper Ruud also brings proven pedigree on the sport’s slowest surface but has struggled to take his game to the top.

Gauff eyes third Slam

Coco Gauff is finding form at just the right time ahead of her title defence, and with Aryna Sabalenka hampered by injury and Iga Swiatek struggling, the American has a golden oppor-

Organisers, players in ‘encouraging’ meeting

Representatives of the world’s top tennis players, who are campaigning to receive a larger share of Grand Slam prize money, and the organisers of the French Open have engaged in an “encouraging” meeting over the issue, a source close to the discussions, reports AFP from Paris.

The French Tennis Federation (FFT) has agreed to negotiate directly with the players’ involved in the protest, which include world No. 1s Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka, the source said.

tunity to claim a third Grand Slam. After dealing with illness and a fourth-round loss in Madrid, Gauff bounced back to reach the Italian Open final where she met an inspired Elena Svitolina.

Sabalenka arrives under an injury cloud after the world No. 1 sustained a hip and lower back issue that limited her movement during her third-round defeat by Cirstea in Rome.

While Swiatek no longer carries the same claycourt aura, the Pole will be expected to go deep.

Viaan's all-round show powers Bangalore SC into semis

BENGALURU, DHNS: Viaan Joshi produced a fine all-round show to fashion Bangalore Sports Club’s six-wicket win over Engrades Cricket Club in a quarterfinal of the KSCA U-16 inter-club tournament here.

Viaan claimed 2/32, and along with Krishna’s 2/30 and Sangam Singh’s 3/18, helped Bangalore SC restrict En-

grades to a modest 160 all out in 35.5 overs.



Viaan followed up his two-wicket haul with an unbeaten 87 as Bangalore SC replied with 162/4 in 28.1 overs. Rajajinagar Cricketers,

Spartons Sports Club and RVCE Gymkhana completed the semifinal line-up.

Brief scores: Engrades Cricket Club: 160 all out in 35.5 overs (Samvit Shastri 72; Krishna 2-30, Viaan Joshi 2-32, Sangam Singh 3-18) It to Bangalore Sports Club: 162/4 in 28.1 overs (Viaan Joshi 87 n.o., Tansh Krishna M 31; Tanish Menghani 2-23). City Gymkhana: 154 all out in 44.4 overs (Siddharth HS 43, Gagan Y 28; Arnab Ravindra Dere 2-24, Jeevan Krishna 3-21, M Neeraj 2-31) It to Rajajinagar Cricketers:

155/3 in 33.2 overs (Niranjan Ashok 50, Rajveer Mehta 45 n.o.). Herons Cricket Club: 91 all out in 32.4 overs (Shwetansh RK 3-25, Vastvik Sharma 2-32, Tanish Bennyuri 4-3) It to Spartons Sports Club: 97/0 in 13 overs (K Hirithik Pollin 53 n.o., Vastvik Sharma 36 n.o.). RVCE Gymkhana: 207/9 in 50 overs (Skandha D Shetty 35, Chirayu Vishesh 64 n.o.; Tupakula Sai Vikranth 28; Rahul Jena 2-34, Vignesh Subhramanayan 3-46, Arjun Bharadwaj T 3-40) bt Young Lions Club: 167 all out in 45.2 overs (Deekshith Gowda HD 25, Kushal Gowda 34, Shivaraj R 53; Chirayu Vishesh 3-33, Narayan Singh Dadiwal 2-7).

DH Classifieds

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THIS AND THAT

The uncanny power of single words

In Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*, regarded by many as his greatest play, the heroine travels from her father's ashram deep inside the forest to the capital of Dushyanta's empire. Pregnant, anxious, and weary, she appears before King Dushyanta, whose child she bears, to remind him of his duties as her husband and the child's father. Dushyanta has forgotten how he pursued and married Sakuntala, and heaps insult after insult on her.

"You are like a painted flame—it looks like fire but gives no heat. You appear chaste, but you are not," he says. His diatribe is misogynistic and nasty: "It is the nature of women to be fickle and to seek what is to their advantage." Kalidasa attributes Dushyanta's cruel words to a loss of memory caused by sage Durvasa's curse. The original, in the *Mahabharata*, is not as charitable to the king.

When it becomes evident that Dushyanta and his royal court are in no mood to believe her, Sakuntala decides further persuasion is futile. She dismisses him in a single word: '*Anarya*'. It means 'non-Aryan' literally; commentators explain that in the *Sakuntalam* context, it means 'uncivilised' and 'uncultured'. That single word is devastating, enough to blow away all the dirt that took Dushyanta long passages to build. Eventually, the sight of a ring brings back Dushyanta's memories, and the couple are happily united.

When the Chief Justice of India, Surya Kant, used the word 'cockroaches' to describe unemployed youth, journalists, and activists, he was scolding a petitioner in his courtroom. He went on to describe them as parasites gnawing away at the system from within, although he later said he was only talking about youth with 'fake and bogus' certificates. Who would have imagined that his admonishments would consolidate youth disgruntlement into a mass online movement?

Sometimes, a single word can accomplish what huge campaigns, manifestos, speeches, and policy documents cannot. It pierces through public fatigue, condenses complex emotions, and holds the power to alter individual and collective destinies. The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which sprang up in response to the 'cockroach' remark, is an example of how a single word can sway millions. Within five days, the satirical collective beat both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress, the country's biggest political parties, in social media engagement. Whether online popularity will translate into any real political resistance, we will know soon, but Abhijeet Dipke, the 30-year-old student who launched the party, is already someone the media is pursuing for stories and quotes.

The CJP projects itself as a meme, and its instant appeal is a testament to the power of satirical humour. It is unlikely that its wildfire virality was planned or expected, even with Dipke's credentials as a former Aam Aadmi Party communications strategist. With just an online presence and no physical office, the CJP says anyone lazy, unemployed, chronically online, and ranting qualifies for membership. A far cry from the lofty ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity that fuelled the French Revolution, but irony and sarcasm are effective, too.

Political leaders get called names, and some of those names stick. The BJP has used 'Pappu' to paint Rahul Gandhi as childish and immature. When the Congress withdrew support to the H D Deve Gowda government in the 1990s, it called him a '*nikamma*', a worthless or incompetent person. These are loaded accusations packed into single, catchy words.

A word that has worked well for the BJP and adversely for its rival parties is 'Hindutva'. And that is a conundrum the English-educated elites in the Congress have failed to crack. What the Congress says it is critiquing when it critiques Hindutva is the political philosophy espoused by V D Savarkar, with its deep suspicion of non-Hindus, and not so much the Hinduism as practised by the majority. But then, Hinduism translated into the Indian languages would be 'Hindutva', and any criticism of 'Hindutva' is received as a criticism of all of Hinduism. The way to counter that would be to qualify Hindutva with a prefix—'*vipareet*' Hindutva? Hindu *vipareetavaada*? '*Vipareeta*' means 'contrary', 'adverse'. By going all out against 'Hindutva' without a clue about its signification is a self-goal the Congress is adept at scoring. And as you can see, the BJP simply loves this game!

'Signification' is a term that comes from semiotics, the study of signs, symbols, and how humans interpret the world around them. A totally unexpected word is now thriving due to a divergence in meaning. Cockroaches are a pest to some, a symbol of resistance to others.



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Donald Trump's visit to Beijing on May 13-15 holds special significance for New Delhi because its messaging of renewed United States-China cooperation constrains India's assiduously built architecture in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific. Over the next three to four years, the two largest economies of the world are expected to establish a constructive relationship of strategic stability, with "cooperation"—and not "competition"—shaping the ties.

History reveals that Beijing uses such high-value partnerships to consolidate its hold in the neighbourhood, while countering other major regional and global powers (such as the then Soviet Union in 1972). New Delhi's concern will be Beijing's zero-sum game posture in light of the emerging collaboration. Bipartisan consensus in the US since the mid-2000s has resulted in New Delhi being seen as a balancing power. Its geostrategic location, rising middle class, and markets became attractive to the US. This peri-

od coincided with the US's assessment of China rising as a "strategic competitor" and a "pacing challenger."

With President Trump making clear his intentions to resurrect US power in the Western Hemisphere, China has begun eyeing the Indo-Pacific as its sphere of influence. China's recent forays into the Taiwan Straits, Japan's Senkaku Islands, the South China Sea, and the India-China borders are likely to be legitimised by the US as a part of the strategic-stability component in its relationship with China.

Given the Trump administration's transactional ways, China has adopted the 23rd stratagem of *Yuan jiao jin gong* (befriend the far to counter the near). It adopted this approach with the Clinton administration to control South Korea and Japan. Now, Beijing wants sway over the Indo-Pacific by enticing Trump with trade, investments, and technology deals.

A direct fallout of Trump's visit is that China's

foreign minister, Wang Yi, skipped the BRICS foreign ministerial meeting in New Delhi on May 14-15, ostensibly for scheduling reasons, and an envoy was sent as a replacement.

The emerging US-China cooperation means the marginalisation of New Delhi and other powers in Asia and Europe. First proposed by Brzezinski and implemented by President Barack Obama in 2009, Group-2 (G2) suggests that the US and China rule the rest of the world. The Obama-Hu Jintao joint statement of 2009 even mentioned both countries looking after South Asian security issues. Since then, coordination among the US, China, and Pakistan has increased in the region. In the May 2025 India-Pakistan conflict, Beijing armed Pakistan, and the US came closer to Pakistan's Army Chief. China will leverage G2 to scale up its "all-weather" friendship with Pakistan. India needs to brace for further aggression.

New Delhi comprehends that with the re-emergence of G2, China's commitment to

multipolarity will decline gradually, with consequences on its role in the BRICS+ and the Global South. Policies under Trump 1.0 and the Biden administration encouraged companies in the US and partner countries to diversify supply chains into emerging markets in Mexico, Southeast and South Asia. However, this China+1 strategy has not yielded substantial results and could be jettisoned by the Trump-Xi Jinping talks.

This is likely to impact India, given the recent shift of several multinational companies to the Indian market and concerns over depleting investment and technology flows. China has placed restrictions on India in exporting rare earth minerals and tunnel-boring machines. It may keep its relations with India on the buyer-seller dependency mode and try to generate trade deficits in Beijing's favour.

In the maritime domain, China has emerged as the world's largest naval force, displacing the US, and is engaged in far-ocean operations in the

Indian and Pacific oceans. Now, following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, it is sending its fleets to the region to provide escort to its oil tankers. China is signalling control of the sea lanes of communications, with consequences for not only Hormuz, but also Bab-el-Mandeb, Red Sea, Suez Canal, Malacca Straits, Sunda, and Lombok. These movements, with American backing, could eventually reduce India's manoeuvrability in the Gulf region.

However, it must be said that despite the US-China alignment, New Delhi has acquired agency through trade agreements signed with the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and New Zealand.

Besides self-help measures and tie-ups with fellow democracies, India needs to diversify its supply chains and reduce its dependence on China. By convening summits to amplify Global South voices, it can endear itself to many countries, thus limiting the G2's impact.

THAT BLIND RHODES SCHOLAR

Strays and safety: An uneasy balance

This week, the Supreme Court of India delivered a sweeping 131-page judgment on stray dogs and public safety—a judgment that will likely shape India's stray animal policy for years to come.

The decision arrives in the backdrop of mounting public anxiety over dog attacks, rabies deaths, and the visible collapse of urban animal management systems. Courts were perhaps always going to be drawn into this vacuum left by decades of municipal inaction. Yet the significance of this judgment lies not merely in the directions it issues, but in the constitutional language through which it frames the problem. At the outset, the Court correctly recognises that the issue lies "at the intersection of public safety and animal welfare" and requires a "careful and principled balance" between Article 21's rights of citizens and the humane treatment of animals. That matters.

Only months ago, during hearings before another bench, stray dogs were discussed in rhetoric more evocative of vigilante extermination than constitutional adjudication. The now-infamous observation that "this is the time to shoot and not to talk," lifted from a film dialogue, reflected the anger many citizens feel. However, it also revealed how quickly public discourse around stray dogs can slip into calls for elimination rather than governance. This judgment, at least in tone, is more restrained and institutionally careful.

The Court upholds its earlier direction that stray dogs cannot be released into institutional spaces such as schools, hospitals, sports complexes, airports, railway stations, and bus depots after sterilisation and vaccination. The bench reasons that such premises are fundamentally different from ordinary public streets because they involve vulnerable populations, hygiene concerns, and uninterrupted institutional functioning.

Prima facie, this position is difficult to dispute. Hospitals cannot function like open community spaces. Schools cannot be expected to expose children to roaming packs of dogs in the name of animal welfare. The Court is also right to reject the argument that the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules create an absolute right for dogs to inhabit every space. The problem, however, lies in what the judgment leaves unsaid.



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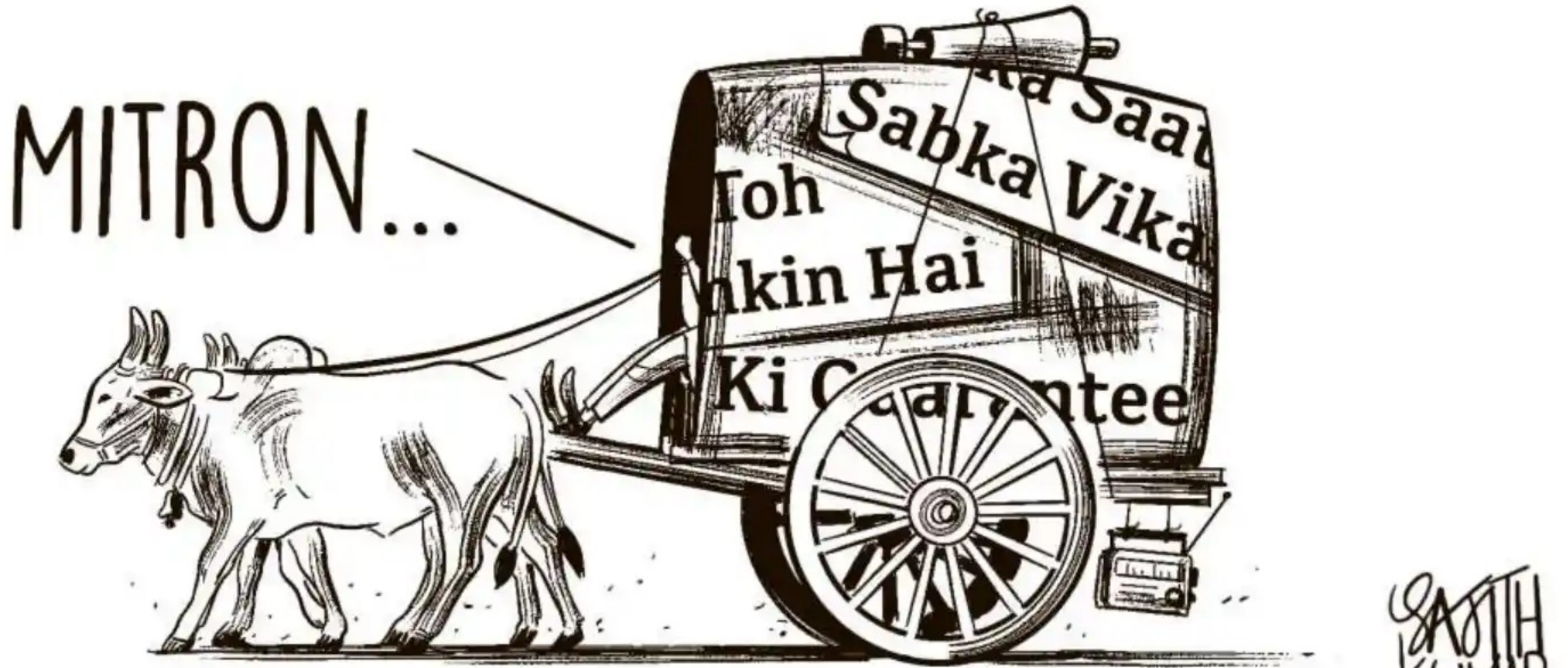
Throughout the proceedings, animal welfare groups warned the Court that India lacks anything close to the shelter infrastructure necessary to support a large-scale relocation of dogs. The numbers placed before the Court were staggering: over 15 lakh educational institutions, potentially implicating crores of dogs, requiring tens of thousands of shelters and enormous recurring expenditure. The applicants also warned that where authorities lack shelter capacity, relocation policies often degenerate into illegal culling, poisoning, disappearance or mistreatment of animals. This concern is not theoretical. It reflects administrative reality.

India's municipal authorities have historically struggled to comply even with sterilisation and vaccination obligations under the ABC framework. Faced with pressure to "solve" stray dog complaints quickly, many local bodies are likely to kill a stray dog rather than relocate it.

The Court does clarify that euthanasia is permissible only in legally recognised circumstances, such as where dogs are rabid, mortally wounded, or demonstrably dangerous. But the judgment offers little guidance on what qualifies as "demonstrably dangerous" or "aggressive". In a climate of public outrage, that ambiguity matters enormously. Without clear procedural safeguards, vague standards can become gateways for abuse.

Equally striking is the near-total absence of a disability rights lens in the judgment. Ironically, the Court itself acknowledges that stray dog attacks disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Yet the judgment does not meaningfully engage with what a disability-sensitive response to the stray dog crisis might look like.

There is no direction regarding coordination between municipal authorities and State Commissioners for PwDs. No framework for prioritised grievance redressal where blind persons, wheelchair users, autistic persons, or persons with psychosocial disabilities face recurring attacks or mobility barriers. Nor does the Court engage with a possibility that could have transformed the discourse: the training and rehabilitation of suitable community dogs as service or assistance animals for PwDs. The truth is that India's stray dog crisis was never created by dogs alone. It is a product of failed waste management, unregulated feeding practices, collapsing municipal capacity, underfunded sterilisation programmes, and decades of administrative indifference. Courts can compel urgency. They cannot substitute governance. And that is where this judgment will be tested—not in the rhetoric of balancing, but in how that balance operates on the ground. Because in India, the distance between principle and implementation is often where both constitutional rights and humane values disappear.



KNOWN UNKNOWNNS

Of love, loss and tragic transcendence

In one of the oldest love stories in Indian tradition, Pururavas, a mortal king, falls deeply in love with Urvashi, a celestial *apsara*. Urvashi agrees to live with him, but under conditions. Pururavas must never appear naked before her except during intimacy, and he must always protect her beloved lambs.

For a while, the impossible arrangement works. Then, as mythology often reminds us, the conditions become the story itself. The Gandharvas steal the lambs in the middle of the night. Pururavas rushes out unclothed to save them. A flash of lightning illuminates him. The condition is broken. Urvashi departs. Pururavas spends the rest of his life searching for her.

This archetype recurs throughout Indian mythology. A human encounters someone or something from another realm. The relationship transforms him. Conditions govern the union. Human emotion eventually breaks the arrangement. Separation follows. The protagonist is left altered forever. We see the same archetype in the story of Shantanu and Ganga.

Shantanu falls in love with Ganga, who agrees to marry him under one condition: he must never question anything she does. Shantanu accepts. Not much later in the story, each child born to them is carried by Ganga into the river and drowned. Bound by his promise, Shantanu remains silent through unbearable grief. At the birth of the eighth child, he finally questions her. The condition collapses. Ganga leaves immediately, taking the child with her. That child later returns as Bhisma.

In the Pururavas story, the failure emerges from desire and impulse. In the Shantanu story, it emerges from compassion and moral anguish. Yet the deeper structure remains similar. The mortal cannot sustain the terms required by the divine.

The symbolism becomes even more interesting because Ganga is herself a river. She flows. She cannot be possessed or contained. Indian mythology repeatedly associates transcendence with movement. Rivers, *apsaras*, and celestial beings resist permanence.

A third variation appears in the story of Vishwamitra and Menaka. Vishwamitra is engaged in severe penance, striving to rise from kingship to the status of a Brahmarishi through discipline, austerity, and spiritual focus. His growing power worries the gods. Indra sends Menaka to interrupt his ascetic ascent.

Here, the "condition" is internal rather than spoken aloud. Penance demands restraint, celibacy, detachment, and absolute concentration.

Gopichand Katragadda
The former CTO of Tata Group and founder of AI company Myelin Foundry is driven to peel off known facts to discover unknown layers
✉ @Gkatragadda

Menaka's arrival tests whether human beings can fully transcend desire and embodiment. Vishwamitra eventually yields to beauty, intimacy, and companionship. Years of austerity dissolve. When awareness returns, Menaka departs, and Vishwamitra resumes his spiritual journey transformed by the encounter.

Across these myths, the female figures are rarely simplistic temptresses or passive symbols. Urvashi, Ganga, and Menaka belong to larger cosmic structures. Their departures are not acts of petty betrayal. They are reminders that some forms of beauty, divinity, and transcendence cannot permanently inhabit ordinary human life.

What is striking is how widely this

archetype appears across world mythology. In Greek mythology, Orpheus is allowed to bring Eurydice back from the underworld under one condition: he must not look back at her during the journey home. Moments before escape, he does. She disappears forever.

In Celtic mythology, fairy women marry mortals under impossible conditions and vanish once those conditions are broken. In Christian traditions, ascetics are repeatedly tested through visions and earthly temptations. In Buddhist narratives, 'Mara' attempts to interrupt enlightenment itself by creating self-doubt.

Another fascinating pattern in Indian mythology is that these transient unions almost always leave behind civilisation-shaping consequences. Pururavas establishes dynastic continuity. Shantanu and Ganga produce Bhisma. Vishwamitra and Menaka have a child, Shakuntala, whose lineage eventually leads to Bharata himself.

Indian mythology appears to suggest that fleeting encounters between the mortal and the transcendent are deeply generative. Even relationships that cannot endure leave behind wisdom, poetry, lineage, and transformation. Perhaps that is why these stories continue to resonate across millennia. I grew up with these stories, so well captured by *Amar Chitra Katha* comics!

Most human beings carry their own Urvashi, Ganga, or Menaka somewhere within memory. Someone who transformed them briefly. Some dream they almost reached. Some version of life they could not permanently inhabit.

Pururavas runs after the departing light. Shantanu watches the river flow away. Vishwamitra returns chasing his aspirations. And through loss, all three become immortal.

ILLUSIONS AND DELUSIONS

Healthcare reform can heal India's economic imbalance

The lessons from the 2012-13 'Taper Tantrum', about the vulnerabilities of India's consumption-led growth model, were largely overlooked due to policy missteps by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime. The shocks from the United States' tariffs and the ongoing US-Iran conflict have again exposed these structural weaknesses, reminding us that external disruptions can quickly destabilise an economy overly reliant on consumption-led growth and capital account flows. We need to understand the 'why's.

The 1991 liberalisation dismantled the Licence Raj, but growth-friendly real sector policies remained limited. Traditional structures and entrenched interests continue to govern the real economy, though our financial sector witnessed sweeping changes and reforms. Independent regulators were adequately empowered, capital and commodity and insurance markets

modernised and opened up, and banking supervision strengthened—creating a vibrantly competitive and widely trusted financial system.

This imbalance produced a peculiar trajectory: India became home to the world's largest number of "filthy but rich" cities, where wealth accumulation outpaced improvements in infrastructure, environment, and basic public services. A recent report said 190 of the world's 390 such cities are in India. Why is this happening?

Large-scale manufacturing, despite honourable exceptions, never truly gained momentum in India. Could the causes lie with excessive policy-focused government presence? In contrast, a different growth engine quietly got created in the real sector in the form of skilled manpower, fostered through the proliferation of state-promoted technical and medical training institutions.

By the time liberalisation arrived

in 1991, India's trajectory intersected with profound global transformations such as the end of the Cold War and the dawn of the internet. Individual mobilities increased. Alongside, widespread economic development in erstwhile colonies and a storm of financialisation in the developed world were creating a vast demand for skilled manpower. India's reservoir of human capital came into its own.

What now exists is a distinctive, largely unplanned growth model—driven by the aspirations of talented individuals and the entrepreneurial energy of technically qualified professionals. Services exports and worker remittances have become the most reliable engines of expansion, setting India apart from manufacturing-led paths pursued elsewhere. India is now the world's largest recipient of inward remittances (\$135.5 billion). These help subsidise the ever-growing merchandise trade deficit

and, together with robust services exports, stabilise the external account. However, handling externally created, periodic turbulence in capital market flows is a different matter.

India's long-discussed "missing piece" of manufacturing is unlikely to take off quickly. Instead, we could realistically begin reforms in healthcare, a sector where low-hanging fruit already exists. Over the past two decades, India's healthcare sector has shown rapid growth, marked by the arrival of branded hospital chains, corporate healthcare groups, and advanced diagnostic centres. These developments have created islands of excellence in metropolitan areas, showcasing India's ability to deliver complex medical procedures at globally competitive costs.

Yet the urban-rural divide remains stark: while metros boast world-class facilities, rural and semi-urban regions

often struggle with inadequate or even absent healthcare infrastructure. Excessive financialisation has also distorted incentives. In large cities, doctors are frequently remunerated through top-line linked salaries, encouraging unnecessary diagnostic tests or avoidable surgeries. Patients, meanwhile, face uneven hygiene standards, doctors with limited attention spans or sometimes even unsafe practices. These issues reflect a system where investor targets can overshadow medical ethics, leaving patients to bear the cost.

Reform is therefore essential. With its vast pool of medical talent, cost advantages, and growing reputation for quality care, India is uniquely positioned to transform healthcare into a strategic USP. But to achieve this, reforms must extend beyond metros. Fiscal incentives, PPP models, and targeted subsidies can help expand capacity in Tier

2 and Tier 3 cities, while empowered regulators and transparent oversight can restore trust in medical ethics.

Given India's subcontinental scale, the opportunity is immense. Medical tourism-focused SEZ destinations can be created in currently lower-tier centres. In a fractured global order where healthcare is a universal need, positioning India as the "healing hub" would not only strengthen domestic welfare but also project soft power abroad, supplementing the remittance-driven model that currently sustains the external account.

Worker remittances are valuable, but they reflect talent exported rather than retained. Medical tourism, in contrast, boosts domestic value and creates jobs, while enhancing current account receipts. Reforming healthcare is not just about curing patients; it is about curing the imbalance in India's economic trajectory.

Wrestling with the child question

Despite government prodding to increase family sizes and the promise of cash incentives in at least one state, economic strain, burnout, and climate anxiety are prompting many Gen Z parents to reconsider having children. **Shakti Swaminathan** explores this paradox

Prem vividly remembers the exact moment she decided she did not want children. She was in the fourth grade when her mother, in a moment of anger, blamed her for being “the reason she was stuck in an unhappy marriage.” That sentence lingered. Over time, it shaped Prem’s belief that “children worsen lives”. Today, at 31, she and her husband have chosen to remain child-free. Her reasons are layered: a lack of healthy parenting models, a desire to break cycles of intergenerational trauma, and ongoing health concerns such as long Covid and anxiety.

“To have or not to have?” has become the modern dilemma for many millennials and Gen Z adults navigating relationships and marriage. In a country like India, where family and lineage have long been central, parenthood was once considered inevitable. Today, however, that assumption is being questioned. Increasingly, young couples are reclaiming the decision to have children as a conscious, personal choice rather than a prescribed life milestone.

Demographic data reflects this shift. India’s Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined to around 1.9–2.0, down from 3.4 in 1992, according to 2023-25 data from the National Family Health Survey-5 and a UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) study. While factors such as education, urbanisation, delayed marriages, and access to contraception play a role, they do not fully explain the trend.

According to Bengaluru-based psychotherapist Prarthana Pai, conversations around parenthood are becoming more intentional. Gen Z appears more open to embracing a child-free identity, while millennials often find themselves conflicted, caught between desire and doubt. What is significant, however, is that both groups are engaging in dialogue. Parenthood is no longer an unquestioned instinct; it is a deliberate, reflective decision evaluated through ethical, environmental, and practical lenses.

The environmentalists

For many, prioritising the planet over lineage is an environmental decision, a refusal to contribute to the already burgeoning global population and carbon footprint. Sandhya Shankararaman, a biotech scientist, decided not to add to the looming environmental crisis. “The challenges and issues I see in the world around me helped me validate the choice of not having my own biological children. However, I’m open to raising adopted children; this way I wouldn’t be bringing a life into this world but helping a life that is already here,” she says.

This environmental consciousness is echoed in academic spaces as well. Deepti Chatti, an Assistant Professor of Climate Justice at the University of San Diego, California, observes that her students are increasingly aware of how personal decisions intersect with global crises. While teaching Climate Anxiety and the Kid Question by Jade S Sasser, she notes that many young people experience “reproductive anxiety” — a hesitation shaped by environmental fears and existential uncertainty. For them, the decision to have a child is not just personal, but political and ecological.

The moral objectors

Ukraine. Gaza. Sudan. And now Iran. For others, the hesitation is moral. In 2024, conflicts in these regions caused record child deaths. Many couples now feel it is a moral hazard to bring a child into a world defined by sudden conflicts and nuclear instability. Some believe that abstaining from parenthood is an ethical necessity.

Vinitha Mokshagundam, a former history professor, and her husband reflect this perspective. Living on a self-sustaining farm on the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border, surrounded by trees and crops they chose to plant, and five adopted dogs, the couple felt the question was simple: why create a new life when one could care for a life already in need of a home? They filed for adoption three years ago and are still waiting for the call.

Yet, not all narratives align with restraint. Benita Chacko, a journalist and new mother, chose to have a child because she did not want to

miss out on what she describes as a “life-altering experience.” It has been a year since her son was born, and she describes parenting as an emotional rollercoaster of unconditional love: “Knowing that someone can love you so much even when you are failing and falling.” At the same time, she acknowledges moments of guilt, especially in the face of global crises. Ironically, despite being a journalist, she consciously distances herself from distressing news in an effort to preserve her mental well-being.

The free spirits

The rise of DINK (Double Income, No Kids) households reflects a desire for autonomy and flexibility. Being child-free offers the freedom to travel, relocate for work, or live spontaneously.

S M Anand, a professional sitar player and teacher, and his wife exemplify this choice. They have chosen independence over parenthood, focusing on their artistic pursuits and caring for their pets. “It’s a combination of other reasons as well, like not bringing a child into a social media-obsessed, opinionated world. It is also unnecessarily too expensive when it comes to education and health. Animals seem to need more support and homes,” Anand adds.

Similarly, Anisha Menon, an architect in Bengaluru, feels that parenting does not align with her temperament or aspirations. “Also, my younger sister is ten years younger than I am, and I have always mothered her. It’s only now, when she is in her late twenties, that our relationship has evolved into friendship. Maybe caring for a younger sibling has satiated my need to nurture,” she says. The architect couple are parents to a dog and four cats.

Interestingly, many child-free couples are pet parents, raising questions about the human need to nurture. However, Prarthana Pai believes nurturing is not purely biological but socially conditioned. She argues that the expectation that women must become mothers is deeply ingrained and often plays out in ways women are not consciously aware of.

Timing and circumstances

With greater access to health information and increased awareness of genetic and developmental conditions, many young people are more cautious about parenthood. Fear of passing on hereditary conditions and concerns around mental health have also influenced decisions. For others, the absence of a supportive partner is a decisive factor.

Pranoti Pawar’s experience reflects this complexity. “I have always wanted kids. But a divorce at 32 and a diagnosis of an autoimmune condition at 36 hindered my plans. Therefore, my search for a partner and dating in my 30s meant I missed the right window.” The engineer-turned-yoga practitioner in Bengaluru has come to terms with her health and remains open to parenthood, but she recognises that timing and circumstance have altered her path.

The male heir question

Despite these evolving perspectives, in many parts of India, the desire for a male heir remains strong. Fertility clinics have proliferated across towns and cities, offering solutions to couples willing to invest significant financial resources in having children.

Chennai-based Dr S Nallaperumal, who specialises in gestational diabetes, recounts the case of a 58-year-old man who wanted another child, specifically a male child, after losing his 18-year-old son to suicide. Unable to cope with grief, the man pressured his wife to conceive again despite her having attained menopause. While doctors dissuaded him from endangering his wife’s health, the man remained relentless. Encouraged by IVF clinics across the city that made grand promises, he ventured into hormone therapy and other expensive treatments until he finally had a baby boy. His declaration, “My son has been reborn”, reveals the deep cultural weight attached to lineage and legacy.

At the same time, many parents who have chosen to have children describe the experience as transform-

Concerned over declining fertility rates, the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are encouraging young couples to have more children. In Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has proposed financial incentives, including Rs 40,000 for a third child and Rs 30,000 for a fourth, in an attempt to counter a shrinking workforce and its potential impact on economic growth. Tamil Nadu’s concern, however, is more political

ative. Beyond the challenges, they speak of personal growth, resilience, and adaptability. Pooja Swaminathan, a teacher, reflects that parenthood has reshaped her perspective on life’s difficulties. “For starters, I am less likely to throw myself under a bus now,” she chuckles. Problems that once seemed overwhelming now appear manageable. “I think I am so caught up in the nitty-gritty of raising a child every day and every year, that I have stopped overthinking about other things.” For her, parenting has accelerated emotional maturity and strengthened her capacity to cope.

Does the “learning curve” of parenthood accelerate maturity, or does wisdom arrive naturally with age regardless of parental status? “Parenting isn’t the only route to maturity,” argues Prarthana Pai. She believes personal growth stems from how peo-

ple handle life’s challenges — illness, caring for ageing parents, career loss, and emotional upheaval — regardless of parental status. While raising children provides a clear structure for growth, child-free living offers its own milestones, often centred on self-directed growth and making intentional, long-term connections.

Young couples have responded with humour and memes online. Social media spaces were flooded with sarcastic replies asking, “Who will pay the fees?” Many questioned whether the state government would sponsor private school fees, rent, and diapers for these additional chil-

dren. Others pointed out the irony of being told to reverse course. For decades, Tamil Nadu aggressively promoted small families through the highly successful “Naam Iruvar, Namakku Iruvar” (We two, ours two) campaign, which many young people grew up believing was their civic duty. They argue that political challenges should be resolved through policy and constitutional measures, not by urging citizens to alter deeply personal life choices.

The endgame

Yet, the question of regret lingers on both sides of the debate. Do child-free individuals regret their decision later in life? Do parents ever wish they had chosen differently? The answers are rarely straightforward.

Prarthana Pai notes that many of her patients avoid confronting regret directly, often rationalising their choices as a coping mechanism. Anonymous internet forums, however, offer more candid responses.

“Do you regret not having a child?” is a frequently asked question on the womenover30 and womenover40 subreddits. While many admit to enjoying being the “hip aunt” more than “dealing with tantrums and a lack of privacy”, occasional responses express grief over not finding the right partner, “missing the window”, or dealing with everyday loneliness. In such threads, reluctant parents who regret having children also open up.

Having children may not be a foolproof retirement plan, given the increasing number of senior citizens in old-age homes, but studies show that urban loneliness is a growing epidemic. A global market research survey found that 43% of urban Indians report feeling lonely most of the time, placing India among the top three countries in terms of loneliness. This raises questions about the long-term

emotional implications of remaining child-free.

In other parts of the world, unconventional coping mechanisms have emerged. The rise of ‘Reborn’ dolls — hyper-realistic baby dolls — highlights the complex ways in which individuals seek comfort and connection. ‘Reborn’ dolls first emerged in the 1990s and have since evolved into a global phenomenon, embraced both by art collectors and “reborn mothers” seeking comfort after loneliness, child loss, infertility, and anxiety. The premier ‘reborn’ doll event in the Netherlands, ‘The Big Event’, is one of the world’s largest doll and teddy bear fairs, where women can be seen carrying their ‘Reborns’ in slings, pushing them in prams, and buying accessories. Zoe Miller, a 50-year-old artist, advocate, and empty-nester, supports ‘Reborn’ therapy, especially after her children left home and she had to grapple with a Multiple Sclerosis diagnosis alone.

As one anonymous voice on the internet aptly puts it, “It is better to regret not having children than to regret having them.” Regret, like choice, is deeply personal and often unpredictable. Deepti Chatti, who is also the mother of a toddler, reflects: “You don’t miss what you don’t know. I was perfectly happy before I became a parent, and I am perfectly happy as a parent.” Her words capture the essence: happiness is not confined to a single path. In the end, whether to have a child or not is an act of self-interest, not in a negative sense, but rather as an honest attempt to live authentically and responsibly.



DH ILLUSTRATION: SAJITH KUMAR

‘Who will pay the fees?’

Concerned over declining fertility rates, the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are encouraging young couples to have more children. In Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has proposed financial incentives, including Rs 40,000 for a third child and Rs 30,000 for a fourth, in an attempt to counter a shrinking workforce and its potential impact on economic growth. Tamil Nadu’s concern, however, is more political

than economic. Former Chief Minister M K Stalin had urged families to expand, warning that future parliamentary delimitation could reduce the state’s representation.

Young couples have responded with humour and memes online. Social media spaces were flooded with sarcastic replies asking, “Who will pay the fees?” Many questioned whether the state government would sponsor private school fees, rent, and diapers for these additional chil-

FEEDBACK

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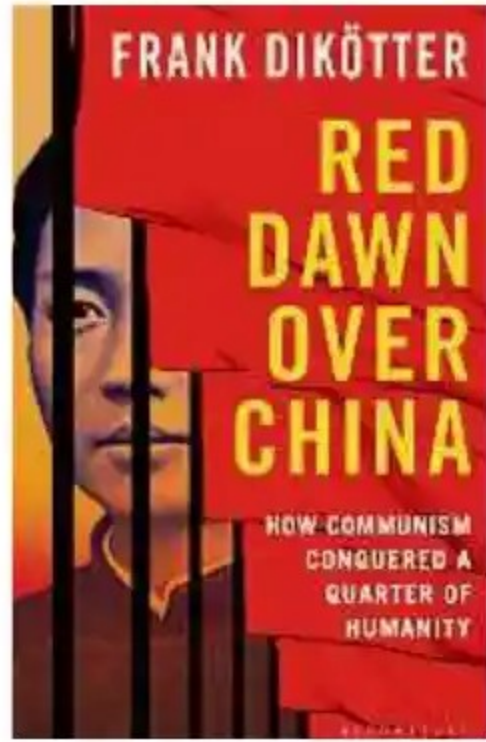
ASTROSPEAK

Guruji Shrii Arnav

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Frank Dikotter dismantles the Chinese Communist Party's heroic self-image while tracing how military power and propaganda have shaped the country, writes Gunjan Singh

Behind China's red curtain



RED DAWN OVER CHINA
Frank Dikotter
Bloomsbury, pp 384, Rs 699

Franks Dikotter's Red Dawn Over China: How Communism Conquered a Quarter of Humanity is an attempt to write an alternative history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Drawing on extensive archival work, the author constructs a narrative that runs counter to the story promoted by the CCP for the last 80 years. Dikotter argues that "The Party controls history, not only its own but also that of its erstwhile rivals", and with this book, he offers an alternative lens through which to understand developments in China between 1911 and 1949.

The book examines in detail the birth of the CCP in 1921 and its eventual victory in establishing the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. Dikotter also highlights the role played by Western writers in shaping global perceptions of the Communist movement. He writes, "Even as they faced annihilation, the Communists scored a major publicity coup when Edgar Snow, a young reporter from Missouri, published a series of interviews with Mao in the *China Weekly Review*...introduced as the 'Chairman of the Chinese Central Soviet Government'".

This was also one of the most violent periods in Chinese history, and the book offers insight into the major power struggles and the eventual evolution of the CCP. Through data, anecdotal accounts and archival records, Dikotter paints a vivid picture of the scale and intensity of the violence faced by the Chinese people. He challenges mainstream discourse

by asserting that this violence was not wielded only by the Nationalist Party and the Japanese; the CCP, too, played a significant role.

The current politics of China under Xi Jinping and the policies adopted by the CCP become easier to understand after reading this book. It provides a fundamental understanding of the Party's methods and its continued reliance on control and command structures. Xi's anti-corruption campaign and its transformation into a tool to eliminate opposition, Dikotter suggests, is rooted in the CCP's earliest years. The author writes, "Purges were intrinsic to a utopian vision of radical transformation, one which could only be brought about by a Party purified of all corrupt elements".

The CCP's official narrative has long projected itself as the party of the people, one that rescued exploited Chinese citizens from the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek and from Japanese aggression. Dikotter disputes this portrayal. According to the author, this situation had not changed significantly even by 1935.

"The Communists, in short, had roughly the same popular appeal as an obscure religious sect or minor secret society".

The book also traces the development and evolution of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) under the command and control of the CCP. Dikotter underscores that the Chinese military is fundamentally the Party's army, functioning as an extension of the CCP itself.

It is both a tool of power projection and an instrument for implementing ideology and maintaining internal stability. The roots of this relationship lie in Mao's own conception of power.

The book also contests the widely held belief that the Communists played the central role in resisting Japan during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Dikotter argues instead that the CCP remained primarily focused on defeating Chiang Kai-shek. "If there was one overwhelming threat to the country, it was Japan. Yet the Chinese Communist Party, fixated on Chiang Kai-shek, hardly ever mentioned the island nation", he writes.

Dikotter further argues that the Commu-

nist revolution in China was heavily dependent on Soviet support. Through changing phases of bilateral relations, the Soviet Union funded the CCP and influenced many of its policies. Even concepts central to Communist mobilisation, he claims, were externally imported. The idea of the "landlord", he writes, was "alien ... imported from Russia via Japan in the late nineteenth century".

Unlike Russia, China lacked "an aristocracy living on vast estates cheek by jowl with impoverished peasants only recently emancipated from serfdom". Yet, ironically, the collapse of the Soviet Union later provided the CCP with lessons about the mistakes it needed to avoid in order to ensure its own survival.

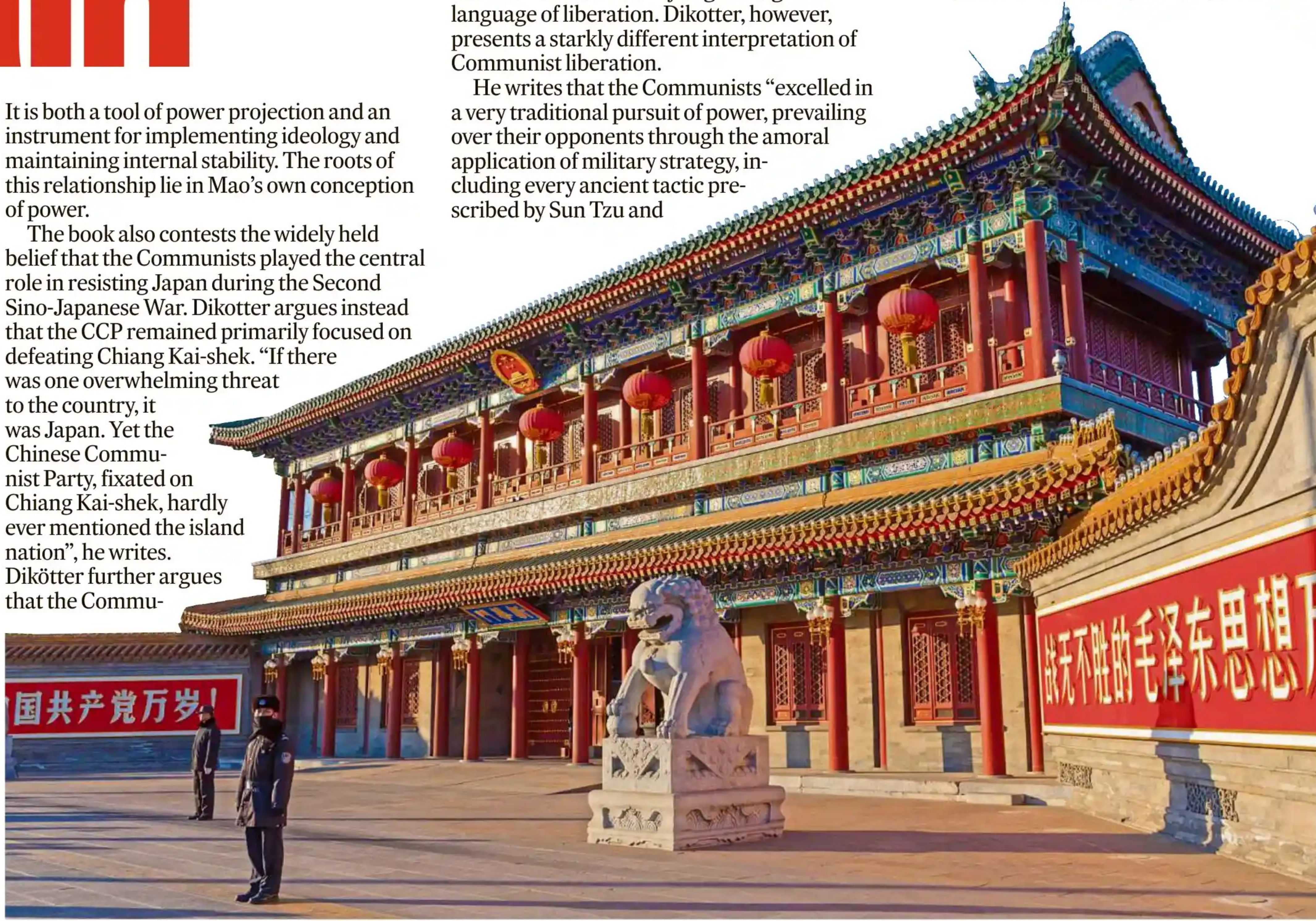
The CCP has consistently justified its actions in Tibet and Xinjiang through the language of liberation. Dikotter, however, presents a starkly different interpretation of Communist liberation.

He writes that the Communists "excelled in a very traditional pursuit of power, prevailing over their opponents through the amoral application of military strategy, including every ancient tactic prescribed by Sun Tzu and

the other great strategists of the past: feign, lie, deceive, retreat, hit, run, sabotage; view everything as a means to achieving the end. And, when at long last in a position to attack, overwhelm the enemy in a war of relentless attrition. Most of all, believe in the cause".

This is an essential read for anyone seeking to understand the foundations of survival, control and political consolidation that continue to shape the CCP today. More importantly, it punctures the Party's carefully curated narrative about its birth, struggle and rise to power.

The author offers an alternative lens through which to understand the CCP. Seen here is the Xinhua Gate of Zhongnanhai in Beijing, the epicentre of China's political power.



Performances of power, desire

Mohammed Hanif writes with savage wit about dictators, clerics and broken revolutionaries trapped in a nation rotting from within, writes Amritesh Mukherjee

To end is to begin. When something finishes, something starts, too. And that is how Pakistani author Mohammed Hanif's Rebel English Academy begins — with the death of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1979. "On the night of the hanging, everything is as calm and orderly as it should be in a jail devoted to the safety and care of one very important man." Pakistan was a nation in flux, its democratic foundations being chipped away by the authoritarian Islamist regime of Zia-ul-Haq. Under martial law, political parties were restricted, labour strikes were banned, the press was censored, and the people were suppressed through permits and curfews.

The Hudood Ordinances further inserted the state into the most intimate corners of life—sex, adultery, rape, women's bodies—re-writing the law in the language of religious authority. It was a nation being remade in the image of its worst impulses, and it is into that remaking that Hanif sets his story.

This state, in Hanif's telling, is embodied by Captain Gul, a military intelligence officer tasked with crushing the "Bhutto Lives" movement, a "soldier of the mind" in the loosest possible sense, a man who dreams of charming Indira Gandhi and impressing American presidents, a man with a high libido and little shame.

Baghi or Salim Ahmed Salim is a former revolutionary hollowed out by state torture, now teaching English to the city's underclass from a corner of the Gol Mosque compound, a gay atheist in a nation where both his desires and doubts are criminal. Beaten and tortured by the state, all he's left with is his Rebel English Academy, where he tries to give his students "a sense of complexity. If they can hold the opposites in their head at the same time, within the same sentence, they are educated."

Baghi's friend and landlord is Maulvi Rafique, "Molly," a man who has found the new order quite profitable.

His mosque is a marketplace, his piety a performance, his religiosity a career, his hypocrisies wrapped in the gift paper of piety.

Into his and Baghi's world arrives Sabiha Bano, a young widow and the daughter of a jailed labour leader, carrying a rusted pistol and a sports bag, with no illusions about the men offering her shelter.

"Nothing makes a man harder than a woman on a chain, a woman in a cage, a woman on a chain in a cage."

She has been thrown from one place to another, always in the service of her so-called saviours, a woman with few dreams and fewer options, and she knows it.

In here, everybody is performing, and the performance is always slightly wrong. The state performs authority, the clergy performs virtue, the revolutionaries perform conviction, and the partner performs loyalty. Heck, even death is a performance, the best of them all.

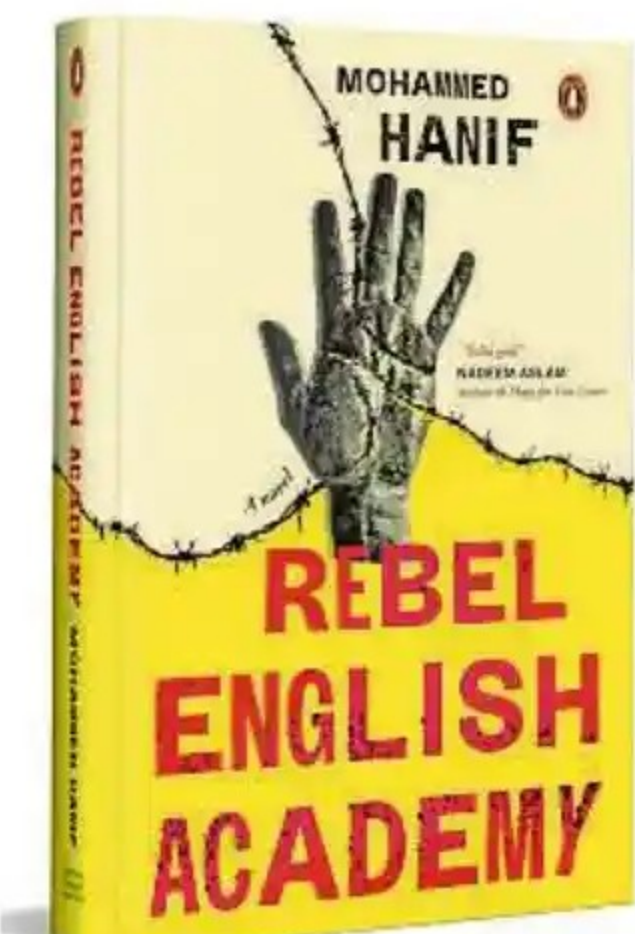
"If death can be described as your reunion with your creator, your one and only rendezvous with your beloved, your carousel into an eternal life, your chance at sharing a heavenly abode with seventy-two beautiful ladies who never fart or menstruate and whose orgasms last for eight hundred years, why would you just call it death?"

But whether it's the state or the mosque, the fuel remains the same: desire masquerading as piety. Captain Gul, watching a recording of a woman being raped, "feels horny and then rage at feeling horny. A righteous anger uncurls in his chest."

In another scene, Molly is pressuring his wife to accept a new wife, Sabiha, the widow he lusts over. When asked back whether she should then "spread my legs in front of another man" after his death, Molly, first confused, then gets furious, "What are you saying, woman? Do you have no shame?" This shame travels in one direction only, always belonging to someone else.

The novel's great recurring joke is not really a joke. "It is often overlooked that the centuries-old wisdom that has arrived at our doorstep might be an ancient accumulation of lack of wisdom there-of or a litany of tomfooleries perpetuated through the ages." The novel may be set in 1979, but the story has no interest in staying there.

The names may change, the uniforms may change, the slogans may change, the ordinances may get rewritten, but the shame, as always, travels downward. The story doesn't end there, never does. It merely relocates.

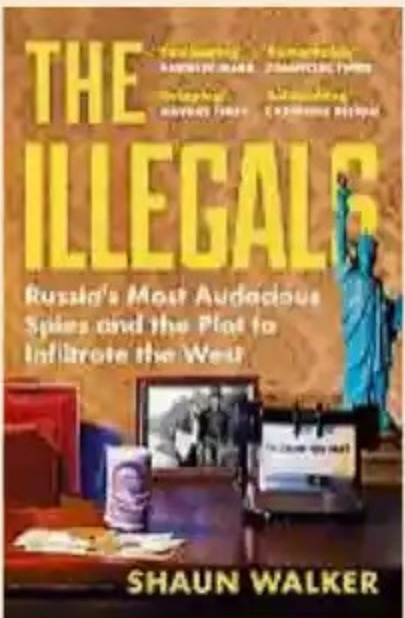


REBEL ENGLISH ACADEMY
Mohammed Hanif
Penguin, pp 320, Rs 799

MOODBOARD

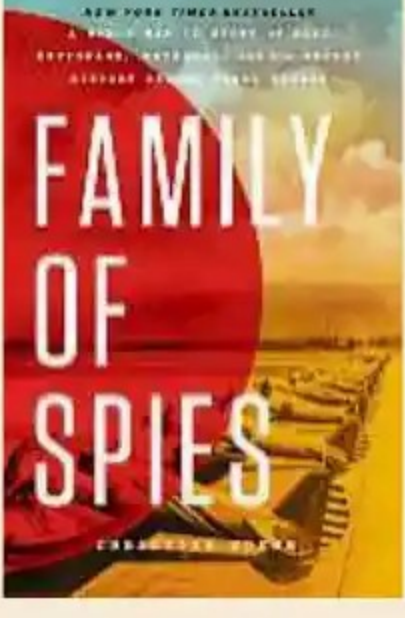
Espionage publishing never goes out of fashion. The newer crop of spy non-fiction is moving beyond cloak-and-dagger mythology and digging into the moral and political ambiguities of intelligence work. Here are a few to check out:

The Illegals by Shaun Walker (Hachette India)
In 2010, two decades after the Cold War had ended, 10 Russian spies were arrested in America, having hidden their true identities

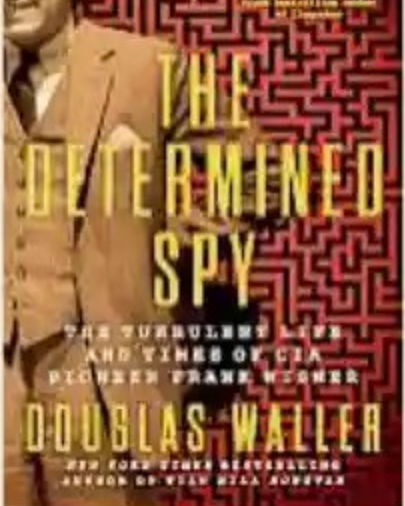


from even their children. They were part of a spy programme that had begun nearly a century earlier. Drawing on hundreds of hours of interviews and archival material, this book shines new light on the Soviet experiment and its messy aftermath.

Family of Spies by Christine Kuehn (Atlantic Publ'n)
The Kuehns were a prominent Berlin family. When the daughter of the family, Ruth, met Nazi leader Joseph Goebbels at a party, the two hit it off, and they had an affair. But Ruth had a secret—she was half Jewish—and Goebbels found out. Goebbels sent the entire Kuehn family to Hawaii to work as spies. There, Ruth and her parents established an intricate spy operation and passed secrets to the Japanese, leading to the infamous attack. This is fast-paced history at its finest.



The Determined Spy by Douglas Waller (Penguin)
Waller's sensitive and exhaustively researched biography is the riveting story of both Frank Wisner as a national figure who inspired a cadre of future CIA secret warriors, and also an intimate and empathetic portrait of a man whose harrowing struggle with bipolar disorder makes his impressive accomplishments on the world stage even more remarkable.



Mood Board is a column that presents thematic lists of books on hot-button topics.

PIQUED

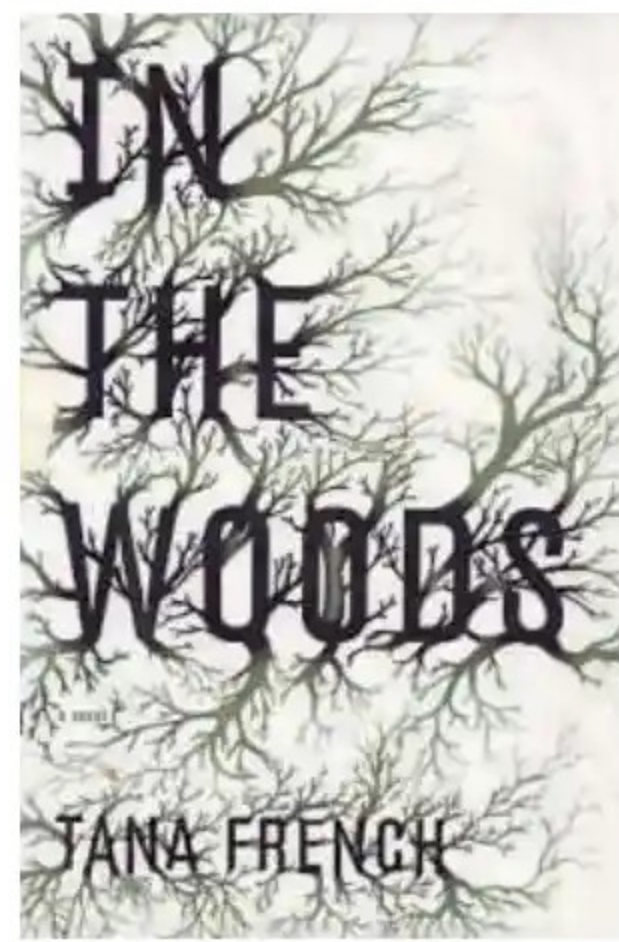
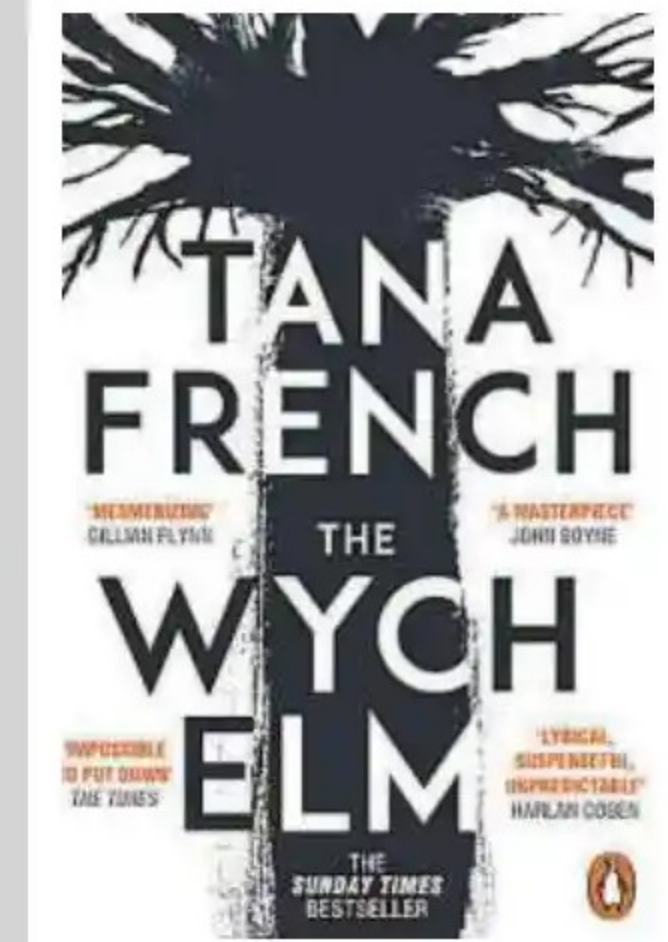
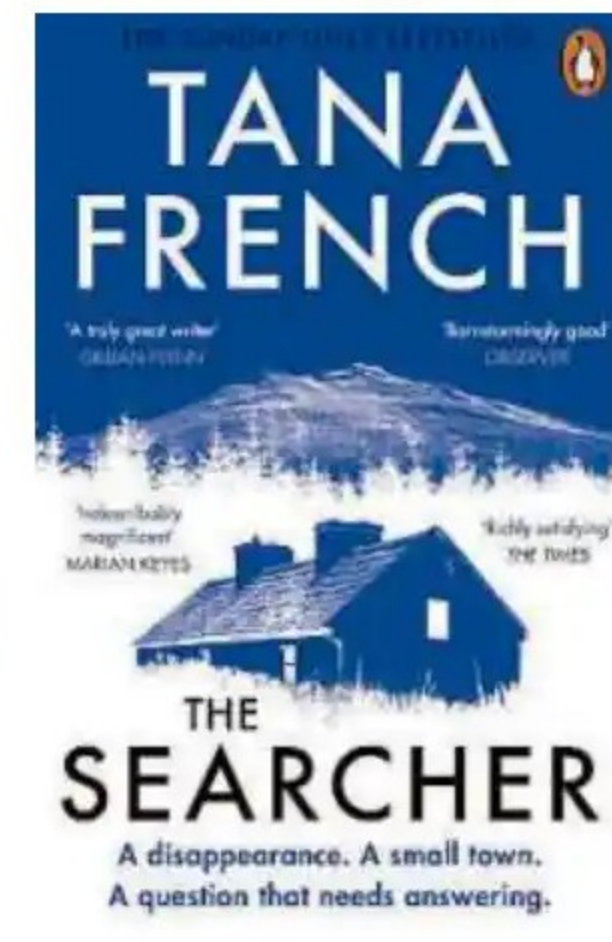
Stories that stay with you, like a scar

There's crime at the heart of author Tana French's books, but her works often hide a more abstract mystery, creating a feeling of dread, writes Nirica Srinivasan

When I think of the writer Tana French, a quote by film director David Fincher comes to mind: "I don't know how much movies should entertain. To me, I'm always interested in movies that scar." This is how I think of my favourite crime novels, the ones that have gotten under my skin and stayed there, almost as a thought I can't get out of my head. For that feeling, to me, Tana French is the best there is.

Tana French is an Irish writer of crime novels, whose books loosely fall into three sets. The Dublin Murder Squad series, which starts with *In the Woods*, is six books that each follow a different detective (the novels can be read in any order). Then, a standalone novel, *The Wych Elm*, is notable for being not from the perspective of a detective at all, but from someone who might be a suspect in a crime. Her latest novels are a trilogy comprising *The Searcher*, *The Hunter*, and *The Keeper*. They follow Cal Hooper, an American ex-cop who settles in Ireland, as he works to integrate himself into a strange new world in which the intricacies of unspoken rules, land ownership, small town gossip, local politics and, yes, murder, all contribute to a completely new sense of morality and justice.

To me, a good mystery novel is made up of several elements—a satisfying mystery is foremost, of course, but there's also strong atmosphere, compelling characters, and a sense of stakes. Some crime novels might meet one or two of these, but I find French's novels usually meet all. Her books are deeply atmospheric, whether they take place in the dark woods of childhood memory (in *The Woods*, where the silence is "a pointillist conspiracy of a million tiny noises") or an all-girls boarding school (*The Secret Place* with its "worn checkerboard tiles" and frenetic, alive energy). They're primarily character-led, and those characters feel real and vivid and fully-drawn as people. These are not procedurals



where detectives will solve crime after crime: instead, in each of French's novels, you get the sense that you're meeting a character at a turning point in their life. Something that happens within these pages will change them forever. Those are the stakes—not just the crime itself, but something larger and more fundamental for the people we're reading about.

There's a crime at the heart of each of these books, of course, but in French's work, there is often a second, more abstract mystery or conspiracy at play. In *In the Woods* and *The Wych Elm*, that's the mystery of memory. Both protagonists are impacted by something that they can't remember all, or that they can't forget—sometimes both at the same time—all contributing to a feeling of murkiness, of instability.

In *Broken Harbour*, which takes place in a half-abandoned luxury development, questions about land, home, and ownership are foregrounded, setting the novel against a country's economy, ideas of progress, politics, and class. In *The Wych Elm*,

we interact with power and privilege, and how they blind us to reality. And in the Cal Hooper trilogy, we question morality itself, local politics and local violence, and the complexities of walking the line between what is right and what is necessary.

One thing you might not find in a Tana French novel is a tidy resolution. Much like real life, her books lean into ambiguity, uncertainty, and imperfection. We might know the murderer, but a larger question still haunts us. Or maybe the crime is all tied up, but the detective's life is changed forever. If you like your crime novels to exist in the space of character exploration, of slow, psychological, and deeply thoughtful engagement with characters and motivations—something perhaps like the first season of *True Detective*, or like David Fincher's films—I firmly believe that there is no better person for that than Tana French. As

I reread her novels now, I'm struck by how what I remember is very rarely who committed the crime, but rather the feeling I was left with long after I closed the book, the feeling of what these characters experienced and the atmosphere it all conjures—it stays with me, like a scar.

The reviewer is a writer and illustrator.

Piqued is a monthly column in which the staff of *Champaca Bookstore* bring us unheard voices and stories from their shelves.



Tana French. (Pic courtesy: Tana French)

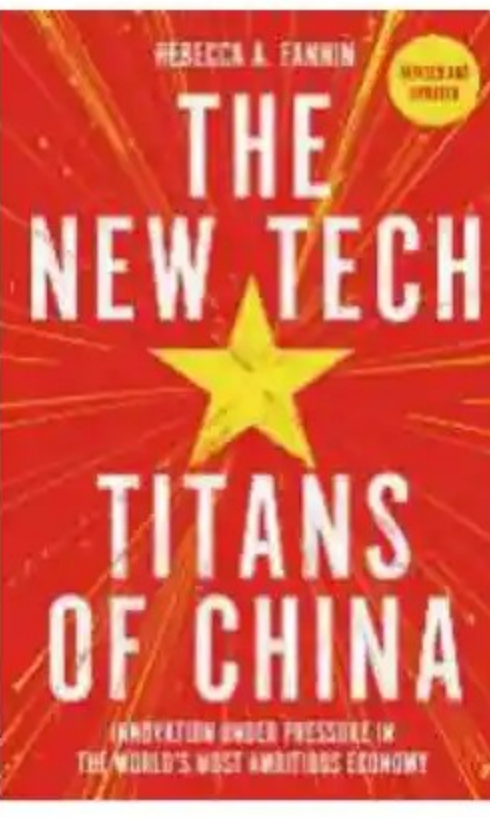
READ OF THE WEEK

Last week, American President Donald Trump flew to China with Elon Musk, Jensen Huang, and Tim Cook. Chinese Premier Xi Jinping told them China's door would "open wider". Deals were struck. Chips were discussed. History, possibly, was made.

Just before the state banquet, a man walked up to Elon Musk and took a selfie. The moment got 20 million views. Everyone assumed he was a fan. But he was Lei Jun, the billionaire founder and CEO of Xiaomi, one of China's most powerful tech companies.

When the most powerful people in the world are flying to Beijing to shake hands with China's tech elite, it's worth knowing who those

people actually are. This book is where you start. The New Tech Titans of China by Rebecca Fannin profiles the companies, founders, and sectors driving China's ambitions: generative AI, digital currencies, chip self-sufficiency, surveillance tech, green innovation, and the global platforms reshaping how billions of people live. Rebecca has spent decades inside this ecosystem, reporting from the ground before the West knew it had reason to pay attention. Rebecca is an internationally recognised expert on tech innovation, venture capital, and US-China geopolitics. She is a journalist, public speaker, and author of five books. She contributes to *CNBC* and *Newsweek* and hosts a regular podcast.



At a time when backlash against diverse gender and sexual identities is intensifying across the world, it is worth remembering that some of the earliest conceptualisations of gender diversity pre-date modern science by millennia. Clay tablets inscribed in cuneiform from Sumerian mythology, dating to approximately 2000–1600 BCE, tell the story of the goddess Inanna's descent into the underworld in one of the world's oldest surviving literary texts, eponymously titled 'Inanna's Descent'. In this myth, the god Enki creates two beings, the kurgarra and the galatur, who exist beyond the male–female binary to revive and rescue Inanna after she is killed by the Queen of the Underworld.

Similarly, ancient Indian texts also acknowledged sexual and gender diversity long before modern scientific frameworks emerged to even categorise them. The Kama Sutra, written around the fourth century CE, classifies humans into men, women, and those of a “third nature,” and discusses same-sex desire without moral condemnation or pathology. Queer identities and practices, therefore, are not modern inventions. Rather, they have deep historical and cultural roots that long pre-date contemporary debates.

Turn to the animal kingdom
Furthermore, if we look beyond the human world to the animal kingdom, we find striking examples that challenge normative assumptions about heterosexuality, binary sex, and fixed gender roles. Same-sex behaviour, sequential and simultaneous sex change, asexual reproduction, and non-binary reproductive strategies are widespread across species. Such phenomena have long vexed biologists and ecologists, prompting important questions such as: how much diversity actually exists in nature? How does it develop over an organism's life course? And what explains its persistence across time?

These questions lie at the heart of American evolutionary biologist Joan Roughgarden's groundbreaking 2004 book, 'Evolution's Rainbow'. Both celebrated and contested upon its release, the book advances a provocative claim: that neo-Darwinian sexual selection theory — long used to explain mating behaviour, competition, and reproductive roles among species — fails to account for the extraordinary diversity of sex, gender, and social organisation found in nature.

The framework of queer identities is not a modern one; while ancient texts have acknowledged gender and sexual diversity, the animal kingdom too challenges assumptions about sexuality, writes **Kanav Narayan Sahgal**

Nature's COLOUR PALETTE

And yet, more than two decades later, the public continues to debate whether homosexuality and transgender identities are “natural” and can be “cured.” The persistence of these questions is itself revealing. When history and biology alike demonstrate that sexual and gender diversity are recurring features of life, these debates cease to be about nature at all. They are instead about people's anxieties around difference and their desire to preserve rigid moral hierarchies.

I came to understand this multiplicity of life more viscerally through my own recent encounter with the natural world. I was on a visit to the Andamans for a scuba diving expedition to celebrate my birthday. While I expected technical challenges with the diving equipment underwater, what I did not expect was the sheer diversity I eventually witnessed.

As I descended into the ocean, I encountered clownfish weaving through sea anemones, sea cucumbers camouflaged against the ocean floor, lionfish displaying their striking, venomous spines, and sea stars, some as large as dinner plates, scattered across the reef.

It was only later, when I began reading more about these species that their biological stories slowly came to strike me as powerfully as their beauty.

I learned that, with the exception of lionfish, almost all the species I encountered in the ocean exhibit remarkable forms of sexual and



reproductive flexibility. Sea stars, for instance, can reproduce both sexually and asexually, and in some cases an entire organism can regenerate from a single severed arm. Clownfish are “sequential hermaphrodites”, meaning that when the dominant female in a group dies, the largest male undergoes sex change and takes her place. Sea anemones, too, display fluid reproductive strategies, reproducing sexually, asexually, or through fragmentation depending on environmental conditions. As for lionfish — even though they do not change sex — males and females are nearly indistinguishable to the human eye. They therefore serve as a reminder of how unreliable visual cues can be when trying to discern a species' sex.

ENGENDERED

need not limit our potential.” And yet, biology is often made to do precisely these things. Why?

Diversity is not an exception
Why do people still insist that queerness is “unnatural”? Perhaps because they have chosen — intentionally or otherwise — not to see the diversity all around them. A thirty-minute dive into the ocean revealed to me a world far more expansive than any framework of gender or sexuality could contain. It also made clear that diversity is not an exception to nature. It is, instead, one of its defining features. The question, then, should not be whether queerness belongs to the natural world or not (answer: it does!). The real question is why we continue to deny fellow humans what nature has been showing us all along: a natural rainbow.

(The author is a communications manager at Nyaaya, the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and can be reached at sahgalkanav@gmail.com)

Not one single story
As Roughgarden notes in her book, “Biology need not tell one single, simple, and boring story. Biology need not be a purveyor of essentialism, of rigid universals. Biology

Of biological rainbows

If we look beyond the human world to the animal kingdom, we can find striking examples that challenge normative assumptions about heterosexuality, binary sex, and fixed gender roles.

The concept of queerness in nature has been discussed at length in Joan Roughgarden's book, 'Evolution's Rainbow'. The book, published in 2004, challenges long-held notions of binaries, and says that there are multiple variations in nature. "Biological rainbows are universal and eternal," Roughgarden writes in the book.

Many evolutionary biologists are positive about the rainbow. They view it as a reservoir of genes that can come to the forefront at different times and places, to guarantee the survival under changing conditions, the books says, adding that there are evolutionary biologists who are not positive about the rainbow and believe that all gene pools are loaded with bad genes.

The book claims that neo-Darwinian selection theory fails to account for sex and gender diversity in nature.

DECODED

Advocating for trans women

Feminist movements have evolved over the decades, with new ideas and concepts constantly shaping them. One of the most significant movements has been third-wave feminism, which includes concepts such as trans feminism, among others. The second wave of feminism largely focussed on issues such as pay parity, and reproductive rights.

Trans feminism refers to feminist ideas applied to trans gender rights and concerns. The term gained currency when Emi Koyama, a Japanese-American activist, popularised it in an early 2000s essay called 'The Trans feminist Manifesto'. The trans feminist way of thinking advocates for both trans and non-trans women while largely focussing on the rights of trans gender women. This way of thinking also seeks support to trans women from all individuals, including non trans women.

Inclusive ideology
Trans feminists believe that gender identities are constructed on the basis of what an individual identifies as, or is comfortable identifying as. This school of thinking doesn't believe in heteronormative notions of gender, according to Koyama. Essentially, the aim of trans feminism is to include all classes of individuals such as trans men or other queer individuals. This is because they feel that the rights of trans women cannot be viewed in exclusion to the rights of others.

The other guiding principle of trans feminism includes intersectionality, which means that individuals may face oppressions that overlap, for instance, racism and misogyny, and this needs to be examined beyond the framework of a monolithic construct called feminism.

Third-wave feminist thinking asserts that the idea of feminism needs to be applied to individual needs and desires. Diversity is the cornerstone of this wave of feminism, and trans feminism sits in perfect harmony with such ideas.

Curated by Savitha Karthik
(Decoded demystifies gender concepts and breaks them down into easy-to-understand language.)



UNSPLASH/ALEXANDER GREY

Travel

A walk through the German town's cobbled lanes gives **Sonia Nazareth** a chance to explore not just its royal heritage but also the region's natural beauty, from woodland trails to mountain routes

Goslar, the thousand-year-old imperial town at the edge of Germany's Harz Mountains, feels especially alive in summer. Long northern evenings stretch the day well past dinner, while forests, reservoirs, and mountain trails become easier to explore. Though winter brings snow-covered forests, Christmas markets, and cross-country skiing, summer remains a particularly rewarding season to experience the region.

Walking through Goslar's UNESCO-listed old town, what strikes me most is its texture. Beneath steep slate roofs and Romanesque church towers, more than 1,500 timber-framed houses stand. Narrow cobbled lanes give way to hidden courtyards and quiet squares, while substantial stretches of the medieval walls and gates still survive. The town prospered through silver extracted from the Rammelsberg mine, and that wealth transformed Goslar into one of the Holy Roman Empire's most important centres.

The grandest expression of that prosperity remains the Kaiserpfalz, or Imperial Palace, built between 1040 and 1050 under Emperor Henry III and later used as a seat of the Saxon kings.

Walking through the reconstructed Romanesque complex, I am struck by how closely imperial ambition once depended on the mountain beside the town. Inside, large 19th-century murals depict scenes from medieval and imperial



The Kaiserpfalz, 11th-century Imperial Palace. (PHOTOS BY AUTHOR)



Goslar makes for a picture-perfect summer destination.

German history. Attached to the palace complex is the Chapel of St Ulrich, significant for housing Henry III's heart in a gilded octagonal reliquary beneath the floor. Modern sculpture appears throughout Goslar, including Henry Moore's Goslar Warrior in the gardens behind the palace, reflecting the town's ongoing engagement with contemporary art. Elsewhere, Goslar's mining history surfaces in smaller details, such as symbolic bronze miners' handprints set into stone around the town, commemorating generations of miners. Near the Rathaus, the Glockenspiel's mechanical figures emerge several times a day to re-enact scenes from local mining life.

By early evening, I find myself back at the market square at Brauhaus Goslar, where traditional Gose

beer is still brewed beneath dark timber beams.

UNESCO-listed heritage site
Just outside town lies the Rammelsberg World Heritage Site, part of the UNESCO-listed “Mines of Rammelsberg, Historic Town of Goslar and Upper Harz Water Management System.” The former mine now serves as a museum, offering guided underground tours through tunnels, shafts, ore-processing plants, and old machinery rooms that reveal how thoroughly mining shaped the Harz over centuries.

A short drive from Goslar, the Burgberg cable car above Bad Harzburg rises through the forest to the ruins of the 11th-century Harzburg castle built under Heinrich IV. Nearby, the Baumwipfelpfad



Sculpture beneath the ruins of Harzburg Castle.

treetop walkway passes through the spruce, pine, birch, fir, and beech canopy before landing at a viewing platform. Visitors can descend by foot, cable car, or zipline above the canopy, before heading to a spa, known for its mineral-rich thermal waters. The long summer light leaves enough time for walks through woodland trails, reservoirs, and mountain routes across the Harz. Steam-hauled narrow-gauge railways still climb through forests towards the Brocken, northern Germany's highest peak, associated with German folklore and witches' legends.

What lingers is the coexistence of worlds. Above ground stand medieval towns; beneath lies an older world of tunnels, machinery, rock, and darkness.

Portugal's Guimaraes is not just known for its commitment to urban greening but also for its rich heritage, dating back to the Roman era. **Sheila Kumar** explores the city's many attractions

Where medieval meets modern

A European holiday destination that's safe, unique and home to many historical sites — that's Guimaraes in Portugal for you. The medieval town, a landlocked area, some 65 km inland of Porto, has been named the Green Capital of Europe for 2026, thanks to its commitment to sustainability, urban greening, and climate neutrality targets. This is also the year Guimaraes celebrates 25 years of being a UNESCO heritage site.

Guimaraes is simply packed with history. It was the 12th-century birthplace of Portugal as well as its capital back in time. There is a huge sign with the words 'Aqui Nascu Portugal', meaning “Portugal was born here”. The town bears all the distinctive marks of a medieval settlement even now; the streets in the town square are cobbled, some of the windows are mullioned, the 10th-century Guimaraes Castle, mostly in ruins now, looks both imposing and forbidding. As the tourist walks down the narrow winding lanes, peering into its old-fashioned cafes and new-fangled pubs and restaurants (including a Michelin-starred eatery) sitting cheek by jowl, it doesn't take long to realise that Guimaraes exudes charm by the bucketful.

One of Portugal's wonders
Settled in the late Chalcolithic period, Guimaraes is one of the Seven Wonders of Portugal and the birthplace of Portugal's first king, Afonso Henriques. The town was also the site of Roman occupation — a stone dedicated to Roman emperor Trajan suggests that this was a spa town in Roman times.

A stone's throw away from Guimaraes Castle stands the Palace of the Dukes of Braganza, a 15th-century stately pile with a museum featuring tapestries,



Church of Our Lady of Oliveira.

furniture, and weapons. This being Portugal, you cannot have a town, historical or not, without churches. The prominent churches of the town are the Sao Francisco church, the Santos Passos church, the church of Sao Miguel do Castelo and The Church of Our Lady of Oliveira.

The town has several rivers flowing gently through it, Selho, Vizela, and the Costa-Couros. It was famous for its leather tanneries in the 19th and 20th centuries but now there are just empty cemented slots where the tanneries used to stand.

Guimaraes is also a university town — it's home to University of Minho and, therefore, dotted with young people walking briskly along, standing at street corners for a quick pow-wow, quaffing Tortas de Guimaraes, a sweet, squash and almond-filled pastry, or downing a glass of Vinho Verde (Portuguese wine) or good old craft beer in one of the town's two main squares. Both the squares are delightful, with chairs and tables under sun umbrellas, the smell of freshly brewed coffee wafting in the air, and if the tourist is lucky, a day market selling lace, glassware and bric-a-brac. Oh, and for shoppers, the town is famous for its textiles, particularly, a traditional type of embroidery known as Bordado de Guimaraes.



Castle of Guimaraes. (PHOTO BY AUTHOR)

Durban dish, desi twist

A hollowed bread loaf tells the story of migrant ingenuity and adapted flavours — the Indian community in South Africa transformed the curry into a portable meal that has become one of the country’s most iconic street foods, writes Raul Dias



The version with meat and vegetable curry.

The ‘bunny chow’ and its origin story

There are, as with many beloved dishes, competing origin stories. One suggests Indian golf caddies in Durban needed meals that could be easily transported. Another places its creation in Indian-run cafés adapting takeaway food during apartheid, when segregation laws restricted dining spaces. Even its name carries layered meanings. The “bunny” has nothing to do with rabbits! Many historians trace it to “bania” or “baniya”, referring to Indian traders who likely sold these curries. “Chow”, in South African slang, simply means food or to eat. Together, the phrase loosely translates to food associated with the banias, though it now belongs to the entire nation.

a South African context. The bread, a colonial import, became the vessel for Indian spice. In that sense, every bite there of, charts a course through a culinary history speckled with migration and modification.

What defines a good bunny chow is balance and constructive integrity. The bread must absorb the curry’s gravy without collapsing. The curry, whether

goat, chicken or beans, should be thick and spiced.

Sides that enhance flavour

Unsurprisingly, the broad bean-red-olent vegetarian version came first, with meat added later as tastes evolved. Sides like pickled grated carrot and onion relish add contrasting texture and flavour to the bunny chow. To eat the bunny chow properly is to abandon utensils. Fingers tear into the soaked bread, dipping and scooping until the loaf becomes part of the curry. Locals order by shorthand — “quarter mutton” or “half beans” — referring to the size of the loaf. It is food that invites sharing, often passed between friends on beaches or street corners.



Bread loaf stuffed with chicken curry.

WHAT’S COOKING

Earthy flavour of the lotus stem

SANGEETA SEN

The lotus flower, has from time immemorial, been seen as a symbol of beauty and divinity. The lotus stem, also called lotus root in common parlance, is used in cooking, binding together taste and tradition, particularly in regions such as Jammu and Kashmir.

Right from the time of the Mughals, cooks in the royal kitchens used local ingredients like the nadru (lotus stems) for adding an earthy flavour to slow-simmered creamy, fragrant gravy dishes such as nadru yakhni (lotus stem broth or stock). In recent times, the nadru yakhni has graced wedding tables — inspired by the Persian khoresht cooking style that was adopted in Mughal kitchens, thin nadru rounds are gently simmered with fragrant fennel, cardamom and other spices in a yoghurt-based gravy, until the gravy brings out the lotus root’s earthy flavour.

In another curry called nadru palak, sautéed lotus root slices are combined with chopped spinach, and then, slow-cooked in a gravy, spiced with aromatic caraway seeds, fennel and hing until the lotus roots lend their flavour to the spiced gravy.

The reverence for the lotus root and its culinary heritage extends beyond Kashmir. At a special lunch, the lotus stem featured as the ingredient in several dishes — hearty lian ou tang soup of lotus stem rounds and pork ribs, sweetened with goji berries, crispy lotus stem fritters and even steamed lotus root dumplings stuffed with sticky rice. These dishes are typically served at a heritage eatery at Tangra, popularly

called Kolkata’s Chinatown. In the late 18th century, when Chinese Hakka immigrants from Guangdong settled at Kolkata’s Tangra, they began to include indigenous ingredients in their traditional cuisines. Soon, nouveau Indo-Chinese lotus root cuisines came into circulation. Take for instance, the case of special Chinese New Year celebration dishes like the lian ou tang soup that absorbed local flavours of the pungent mustard oil, turmeric and green chillies, all of which



Lotus stem curry, cooked in a tomato-onion based gravy.

enhanced the earthy flavours of the lotus stem in the soup. Even today, the gently simmered lian ou tang soup, accompanied by fried momos served at Tangra’s heritage eateries, speaks of continued Indo-Chinese lotus root cooking styles.

Furthermore, health-wise, the lotus root is known to be rich in vitamin C, potassium, and antioxidants.

(What’s Cooking shines the spotlight on a single ingredient, its nutritional qualities and the ways in which you can use it.)

Wellness

Bartholin’s cyst explained

DEEPA NATARAJAN LOBO

In August 2025, Rachana (name changed), a 38-year-old employee at a multinational, noticed a small swelling in her vaginal area. Like most people, she brushed it off assuming it would go away on its own. “It was tiny at first, but it kept growing. Soon, I couldn’t sit or walk with ease. My periods became very uncomfortable too,” she recalls. What followed was a painful, deeply distressing experience — one she later learned had a name: a Bartholin’s cyst.

Not discussed often Despite being relatively common, Bartholin’s cyst isn’t commonly discussed, often leaving women confused, anxious, and unprepared.

In simpler terms, there are two pea-sized Bartholin’s glands located on either side of the vaginal opening. When the duct of one of these glands gets blocked due to infection, inflammation, or even thickened secretions, a fluid-filled swelling can form. “It often develops without warning because the blockage is gradual and initially painless,” explains Dr Anita Soni, Director of Obstetrics & Gynaecology at a Mumbai hospital.

For many women, the cyst may remain small and painless. But when infected, it can escalate into an abscess causing severe pain, redness, and even fever. That escalation is something Rachana experienced within days of noticing the swelling. “It grew to the size of a golf ball and I had to rush to the hos-



pital, where the doctor used local anaesthesia to drain it,” she says. The relief was immediate, and gradually, the symptoms subsided. But earlier this year, the cyst returned. Surgery was suggested, and before she could proceed, the cyst ruptured on its own.

According to Dr Soni, Bartholin’s cysts account for nearly two per cent of gynaecological consultations annually, most commonly affecting women between the ages of 20 and 40. Risk factors include prior history of cysts, local infections, and being sexually active.

Needs monitoring

“A simple cyst is usually painless, but an abscess is acutely painful,” says Dr Soni. While small, asymptomatic cysts may simply be monitored, infected ones require prompt intervention — typically antibiotics and incision and drainage. In recurrent cases, a minor surgical procedure called marsupialisation may be recommended.

Dr Soni says that awareness is key, not just for early treatment, but also to rule out rare complications, especially in women over 40 where further evaluation may be needed. For now, the advice is simple: don’t ignore persistent discomfort.

PCOS is now PMOS: What does it imply?

Renaming polycystic ovary syndrome to polyendocrine metabolic ovarian syndrome reflects a broader reality that includes hormonal and metabolic disorders, and not just reproductive health, writes Dr Aviva Pinto Rodrigues

A recent paper published in *The Lancet* has announced the renaming of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) to polyendocrine metabolic ovarian syndrome, or PMOS, in what experts are calling a major shift in women’s health research and awareness. The change comes after years of debate among scientists, clinicians, and patient advocacy groups who argued that the term PCOS has failed to capture the true nature of the disorder. A global survey of over 14,000 responses was taken into account before arriving at the name change.

The term polycystic ovary syndrome, widely known as PCOS thus far, has impacted how millions of women understand their medical condition. Doctors and researchers believe that the name of the condition has in itself posed difficulties for people to understand the medical problem. This name is a simplistic understanding of a medical condition that primarily affects people with ovarian cysts. However, many women who receive a PCOS diagnosis actually show no signs of ovarian cysts. Also, women may have ovarian cysts but they may not exactly suffer from the syndrome. The condition affects a wide range of health areas that

extend beyond its reproductive health impacts. The condition is, in reality, a complex hormonal and metabolic disorder which affects all aspects of female health according to research. The term PMOS attempts to reflect this broader reality.

Hormonal and metabolic

The word ‘polyendocrine’ acknowledges that multiple hormonal systems are involved. The term ‘metabolic’ demonstrates a strong relationship between insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. The name contains the word ‘ovarian’ because reproductive symptoms remain essential for diagnosis although they no longer serve as the primary identifying factor.

The new terminology offers a complete comprehension of the disorder which will lead to better diagnostic methods and treatment solutions.

The most common misunderstanding about PCOS states that the condition only affects women who have excessive body weight.

The public image of PCOS has been established through social media platforms and popular cultural references as a condition that exclusively affects people with obesity. The assumption causes doctors



to warn that multiple women will remain undiagnosed due to this single factor.

Impact of syndrome

The condition, hitherto known as lean PCOS, affects women who show normal body weight but face severe hormonal disorders. Women with this condition experience facial hair growth and scalp hair thinning and they also suffer from fertility difficulties and mood fluctuations and insulin resistance while their body mass index remains within normal limits. Medical professionals dismiss many lean women because they do not match traditional physical characteristics associated with their medical condition. Some

PMOS and mental health

Experts recommend more research on mental health as an essential area of study. Women with PMOS face body image challenges because they deal with unpredictable symptoms and social expectations related to their appearance and fertility. They also experience anxiety and depression at higher rates, according to multiple research studies.

HEALTH IN THE HEADLINES

patients are told they weigh “too little” to develop PCOS while others spend years searching for answers about symptoms that persistently affect their everyday activities. Research increasingly shows that insulin resistance can occur even in women who are not overweight. This is one of the reasons why experts believe the term PMOS is more accurate. It helps to concentrate on internal problems rather than external factors such as weight.

What was thus far known as PCOS is considered to be the most common endocrinological disorder among women. Nevertheless, experts believe that up to 70 per cent of all patients do not have any diagnosis because of social taboos related to reproductive issues. The condition starts during adolescence with symptoms that include irregular menstrual cycles and constant acne breakouts and sudden weight increases and excessive body hair growth. The untreated condition develops into infertility, diabetes, fatty liver disease, sleep apnea, anxiety, depression and heart disease risk escalation over time.

Weight loss not the only focus Doctors say management should

never focus only on weight loss. Individualised treatment should be the focus.

Patients need medical treatment which includes hormonal therapy and insulin-sensitising medications, fertility support and psychological counselling that matches their specific symptoms and needs.

Attitudinal shift

The shift from PCOS to PMOS will not create immediate changes in how doctors diagnose patients. Experts believe that this development represents a significant transformation in the cultural and medical aspects of society. The condition extends beyond ovarian cysts because it involves more than body weight.

The condition requires healthcare providers to identify it as a lifelong multisystem disorder that needs immediate recognition and additional scientific investigation and professional treatment.

The name change provides validation to millions of women who have spent years feeling misunderstood. *(The author is senior consultant and clinical director at a fertility clinic in Bengaluru.)*



ON THE PALETTE

Anger sewn in Silk

An ongoing exhibition in Bengaluru by a Dutch artist, who is a survivor of sexual assault, makes a powerful statement against systemic injustice, writes **Nabamita Mitra**



Some of the exhibits on display.

“What is the way to use anger to fuel something other than hurt, to direct it away from hatred, vengefulness, self-righteousness, and make it serve creation and compassion?”

The Ursula K Le Guin quote draws attention as one enters the room where artist Afra Eisma’s work is displayed at the Museum of Art and Photography in Bengaluru. The installations of the ‘Warrior Garments’ series flow down from the ceiling, creating a montage of apparel with eclectic messages painted on the gowns.

It may seem disturbing, and to some extent, disorienting, when one reads the dichotomy in the title of the series, until one understands the kind of resistance that fuelled the art.

“I wanted to have a title that instantly tells you that it is not just beautiful princess-y dresses that you are looking at, but something more than that, a title that feels empowering and confusing at the same time. It raises the question, ‘Wow, what are we looking at?’ The works are about empowerment, fighting with intention, love and care,” says the 33-year-old Dutch artist, who is a survivor of sexual assault, and who, along with several others, fought successfully for an amendment to the Netherlands’ outdated Sexual Offences Act.

Multiple roles

Afra’s anger is sewn in silk and organza, depicting the multiple roles a woman plays in society, including that of a warrior.

However, the war is not just external but internal too. The ersatz social narratives and the inadequacies in policy-making often put a ‘victim’ tag on a woman’s anguish instead of providing a platform to vent it. The profusion of anger and frustration growing inside her eventually holds her in thrall, crippling the will to face and fight the demon within and without. For Afra, art became a refuge and a method of resistance, seeking change to a practice that had systematically weakened women’s rights in her country.

“I felt a lot of rage in my body, and anger at the system that was letting us down and that was unable to protect us,” the artist says as she describes the overwhelming emotions that have birthed her art installations, and through which she wants to break the taboo about

conversations around sexual violence.

Afra not only experienced rape but was also stalked and received death threats. Adding to this was the country’s law that did not see sex without consent as rape unless there is physical force, threat or coercion involved.

She started the #MeToo movement in the Netherlands in 2020 along with several other artists who were survivors of sexual assault. “For me, it (the movement) was a choice of life and death, and there was no other way out,” she says.

The local media furthered the movement by highlighting cases of violence, denial of justice and the loopholes in the law.

In 2024, the country finally amended the Sexual Offences Act.

While she took the liberty to hide her emotions in her artwork, she spoke publicly, and for the first time, about her experience at the biennale, and later in Bengaluru.

It was not only liberating for Afra but for all women who are still grappling with the choice of words to start a conversation about sexual violence. That isolation ends in Afra’s creative expression, which provides support and solace to these women who are forced to live in shame.

“Art cannot change policies, but it can address the issue and help start dialogues. It is helpful and important,” says the artist.

The exhibition is on at MAP, Bengaluru, till June 21.



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